SANDGROUSE

VOLUME 38(2) 2016

OSME

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST
THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

OSME

For details of OSME's aims, membership, meetings, conservation & research funding, osmebirdnet, OSME recommended bird taxonomy, *Sandgrouse* instructions for authors and news and tweets see www.osme.org.

VICE PRESIDENTS (AS AT JUNE 2016)
Ali bin Amer Al Kiyumi (Oman)
Sherif Baha el Din (Egypt)
Ramaz Gokhelashvili (Georgia)
Dan Alon (Israel)
Dr Akram Eissa Darwish (Syria)
Dr Sergey Sklyarenko (Kazakhstan)
Dr Ali Adhami Mirhosseyni (Iran)
Dr Azzam Alwash (Iraq)
Melis Charalambides (Cyprus)
Dr Nabegh Ghazal Asswad (Syria)

COUNCIL (AS AT JUNE 2016)
Michael Blair • *ORL compiler (co-opted)*
orl@osme.org
Phil Cannings
Sal Cooke
Helen Demopoulos
Ian Harrison
Chris Hughes • *Treasurer & Advertising*
ads@osme.org
Nick Moran (co-opted)
Dora Querido
Irene Sabiniarz • *Secretary*
secretary@osme.org
Dr Robert Sheldon • *Chairman*
chairman@osme.org
AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan
• *Website management (co-opted)*
Effie Warr • *Sales & Membership (co-opted)*
sales@osme.org | membership@osme.org
John Warr • *Joint Treasurer (co-opted)*
treasurer@osme.org

OSME CORPORATE MEMBERS
Avifauna
Batumi Birding
Birdfinders
BirdGuides
Greentours
NHBS
Rockjumper Birding Tours
Sunbird

SANDGROUSE

OSME's peer-reviewed scientific journal publishes papers and notes on the ornithology primarily of the OSME region. Material concerned with related areas *eg* North Africa, northern Somalia, further east in central Asia, the pelagic Indian ocean, and reviews will also be considered. If in doubt email the editor.

Editor: Dr Peter Cowan, University of Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman
sandgrouse@osme.org

Editorial Advisers: Vasil Ananian, Paul Goriup, Mike Jennings, Dr Fares Khoury, Guy Kirwan, Dr Mike McGrady, Dr Stephen Newton, Yoav Perlman, Dr Manuel Schweizer, Arend Wassink

Photographic Editor: Paul Doherty

Identification Consultants: Dr Raffael Ayé, Arnoud van den Berg, Chris Bradshaw, Andrew Lassey, Richard Porter

OSME and BirdLife International work together to conserve birds

BirdLife INTERNATIONAL

Registered charity no 282938

©2016 Ornithological Society of the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

SANDGROUSE VOLUME 38 (2) 2016

146 Update on the status and occurrence of Arabian Magpie *Pica pica asirensis* in Saudi Arabia. JEM BABBINGTON

152 First record of Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* in the United Arab Emirates. OSCAR CAMPBELL, MARK SMILES & SIMON LLOYD

156 First breeding record of Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and apparent breeding of White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, for Iraq. LAITH ALI AL-OBEIDI

160 Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*: further evidence of occurrence in Afghanistan. MARK MALLALIEU & RICHARD SEARGENT

161 First documented record of White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* in Syria and records there of Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti annae* and Basalt Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens warriae*, all 2009. NICOLAS MARTINEZ, ADEEB AL-ASSAD, DANIEL MATTI, TOBIAS ROTH, DORIS STALLING & THOMAS STALLING

165 Historical example of egg-collection by man of Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* eggs on lake Karakul, former Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic. ROLF NESSING

169 The Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas of the Socotra archipelago, Yemen. RF PORTER & AHMED SAEED SULEIMAN

192 Six interesting bird records including two new species, Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* and White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, for Lebanon. GHASSAN RAMADAN-JARADI & FOUAD ITANI

197 Common Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus* new for Turkmenistan. ELDAR A RUSTAMOV, SHANIYAZ MENLIEV & EVGENIY AGRYZKOV

199 First record of Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* for Azerbaijan. IVAN SJÖGREN

201 Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris* in the United Arab Emirates—first record for Arabia. MARK SMILES

205 Unusual breeding site for Brown-necked Ravens *Corvus ruficollis*, Luxor, Egypt. UFFE GJØL SØRENSEN

207 Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus* recorded in Oman. PER ØYSTEIN KLUNDERUD, MAGNUS ULLMAN & THOR ØSTBYE

211 Olive-backed Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni* in Hormozgan, south Iran, January 2016. MAGNUS ULLMAN & MATTIAS ULLMAN

214 From the Rarities Committees. IAN HARRISON (COMPILER)

223 Corrigenda

224 Around the Region. IAN HARRISON (COMPILER)

Photo above: Pallas's Gull *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*, Muscat, Oman, 4th February 2012. © *Andrew Adams*

Cover photo: Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus calidus*, Hama'Apil, Israel, 11th November 2011. © *Amir Ben Dov*

Update on the status and occurrence of Arabian Magpie *Pica pica asirensis* in Saudi Arabia

JEM BABBINGTON

The Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* includes an isolated population, Arabian Magpie *Pica pica asirensisis*, endemic to the Asir province of southwest Saudi Arabia where it has a very restricted range. The area where the birds occur is part of the Asir mountain range (which extends into Yemen), a region holding all but one of the Arabian endemic bird species, suggesting the magpie population has been isolated for a very long time (Madge & Burn 1993). The bird was first described by Bates 1936 after collection by Philby who said it was plentiful in the Asir mountain region and is unmistakeable within its restricted range. Differences from the nominate population of Europe include a darker, duller overall colouration with only a slight sheen and with less white on the scapulars and primaries, all black rump, shorter wings, much shorter tail with a purple gloss and larger bill and feet (Plates 1–3). The juvenile differs from the adult by being duller, with black areas of the plumage unglossed, and white areas washed with brown (Madge 2016). Birds are very vocal as group members call to keep in contact with each other, generally calling throughout the day, and in my experience this is often how they are located in the field, with at least three types of calls noted: A full loud *'quaynk quaynk'*, made when the bird calls from a top branch or while moving which is presumably the main contact call. A similar tone *'Quenk Quenk'*, is uttered when the bird is searching for insects or under some

Plate 1. Arabian Magpies *Pica pica asirensisis*, Sallal Al Dahna, Tanoumah, Asir province, Saudi Arabia, 5 July 2013. © *Jem Babbington*. Note large bill, strong legs, purple bronze gloss to tail and dull overall plumage compared to Eurasian Magpie *P. p. pica*.

Plate 2. Arabian Magpie *Pica pica asirensisis*, Sallal Al Dahna, Tanoumah, Asir province, Saudi Arabia, 5 July 2013. © *Jem Babbington*. Note larger bill and feet, far less white on scapulars and duller and darker overall colouration compared to nominate Eurasian Magpie.

Plate 3. Arabian Magpie *Pica pica asirensisis*, Sallal Al Dahna, Tanoumah, Asir province, Saudi Arabia, 8 July 2015. © *Jem Babbington*. Note shorter wings and tail compared to nominate Eurasian Magpie.

stress and may be some sort of alarm call; while the young birds make a much softer *'qua qua'*, which seems to be a soliciting call during food begging or when following their parents (Yahya & Salamah 1996). The distinct calls along with morphological differences have led a number of observers to suggest that *asirensis* is specifically distinct, however, others disagree and say the calls are similar to distress calls of nominate Eurasian Magpie. Recordings indicate Arabian Magpie calls are very different from nominate *pica* (Birkhead 1991), but there is debate whether the calls are substantially different. Mike Jennings (pers comm) says Eurasian Magpie calls sound like *asirensis* calls, but are not as loud, clear or as often repeated, whereas others (JB pers obs) suggest they are different.

The taxonomic position of Arabian Magpie is certainly uncertain, although it is generally regarded as a subspecies of Eurasian Magpie. Gill & Donsker (2016) regard it as such, though there is a caveat "MtDNA phylogeny suggests that Eurasian Magpie comprises several potential species including Korean Magpie *P. sericea*, Mahgreb Magpie *P. mauritanica* and Asir Magpie *P. asirensis* (Lee et al. 2003)". Recently, *P. p. asirensis* has been listed as a separate species *P. asirensis* forming a superspecies with *P. pica, P. nuttalli* and *P. hudsonia*. Isolation within a very restricted range and differences in vocalizations and structural features suggested that treatment as a separate monotypic species is warranted (Madge 2016, van den Berg 2014). Arabian Magpies are sedentary and localised and occur especially in the juniper forest zone, often in well vegetated upland valleys and wadis, of the Asir highlands 1850–3000 m asl. Many of these areas are remote and difficult to access so the exact numbers of birds is difficult to assess but the estimated breeding population has been noted as a minimum of 135 pairs and maximum 500 pairs (Jennings 2010). Five surveys, February 1995–July 1996, resulted in a total of 147 sightings of 90 birds in the area

Plate 4. Sallal Al Dahna, Tanoumah, Asir province, Saudi Arabia, 11 July 2014. © *Jem Babbington*. The site is an upland valley at 1955 m asl with large mature trees and a year-round water supply.

Plate 5. Al Mehfar park, Tanoumah, Asir province, Saudi Arabia, 1 June 2016. © *Jem Babbington*. The breeding site is an upland valley at 1950 m asl with large mature trees, extensive areas of open ground and a small stream of water.

between Taif and Abha, although all sightings were limited to the area of Abha and 120 kilometres north of same, as well as Jebel Gaha (Ebels 2003).

Many trips to this small area since 2010 by resident birdwatchers/bird photographers in Saudi Arabia, have found a substantial decline in numbers with a maximum of ten birds seen during any visit. The small population is restricted to the highest and wettest Asir, but they are not confined to juniper and are often found in acacia and terraced fields with fruit trees and mature juniper, habitat that is threatened by development and juniper die-

back, and as a result the taxon must be regarded as endangered (Jennings 2010). Habitat loss appears to be a major reason for the apparent decline in the population, mainly on account of tourism developments, with natural habitats in the Asir shrinking alarmingly quickly (Yahya & Salamah 1996). In 2010 a survey (Jennings *et al* 2010) was undertaken in part to look for the species with only a few birds located. Their report stated "it seems clear that this very scarce bird has declined further in numbers in recent years". The decline of the Arabian Magpie is most clearly shown by the recent lack of records from Jebal Soudah area, near Abha, where during the above mentioned survey, 4 July–17 July 2010, no examples of the species were recorded there (or on the Raydah escarpment, at the Al Jarrah reserve or on a short visit to Jebal Aswad, areas that in the past were regarded as strongholds for the species, Jennings *et al* 2010). Jebal Soudah is now a popular tourist site with cable car rides and picnic sites and is heavily disturbed and no further records have occurred in the area since 2010 despite extensive searching. The decline has also been noted at the nearby Wadi Tale'a area that has also suffered from habitat loss but is significantly less disturbed than Jebal Soudah. Previously, birds were regularly seen in the Wadi Tale'a area with eight old nests located in less than one km 8 July 1987, but the only recent sighting there was on 22 July 2010 when three were at Sharma. The decline appears to be more complex than just habitat loss as the well forested and protected Raydah reserve has also suffered a significant reduction in sightings with only one brief sighting 4 October 2010 when a single bird was seen briefly on the ranger's camp antenna at 2795 m asl (Brendan Kavanagh pers comm) and another in May 2016. No further birds have been noted there despite regular visits to the location at different times of year by many birdwatchers/bird photographers. A new drivable road has been constructed through the reserve creating more disturbance, but car numbers are few due to the steepness of the road and a Saudi Wildlife Authority ranger post barrier across the road restricting access. The isolated Jebal Gaha has also been reported as a stronghold for this species (Yahya & Salamah 1996, Ebels 2003) and on 21 July 2010 a pair were seen at 1850–1950 m asl on a cliff edge of the sandstone plateau there, an area of mainly dead juniper trees. The birds appeared to prefer the heavy shade of leafy fig and other trees in gullies just below the plateau lip with several old nests of this species seen on several occasions in dead juniper trees (Jennings *et al* 2010). Birds may still occur there, as two pairs were seen in May 2016 at nearby Haroub. No visits have been made to Jebal Gaha itself in recent years by birdwatchers due to its remoteness and difficulty in finding accommodation near the site.

Despite extensive searching since 2010, particularly in the Jebal Soudah and Wadi Tale'a areas, the only area where birds have been seen regularly has been that between Billasmar, Tanoumah and An Numas. Attempts to locate Arabian Magpie have been aided by a number of prolonged trips since 2014 to look for endemic bird species (Abdullah Alsuhaibany and Chris Boland pers comm). Also stand-alone camera traps have been set up by the Saudi Wildlife Authority in remote areas of the Asir mountains near Abha from 2010 until present, that would be suitable for photographing the species, however none of the cameras has recorded any magpie activity to date (M Zafar-ul Islam pers comm). An Numas (19° 10.00′ N, 42° 10.00′ E) is the most northerly place where the Arabian Magpie has been recorded since 2010 and is situated *c*30 km north of Tanoumah (an area where birds have been seen regularly since March 1985). Five km northwest of Tanoumah at 1950 m asl is Al Mehfar park, 18° 57' 50.9" N 42° 08' 00.6" E, a more open site with a mixture of terraced fields and boulders with large mature trees (Plate 5). A number of visits were made to this area in 2014 with a single bird seen feeding on leftovers 22 January, one bird seen collecting nest material from a dead palm tree 5 May, two birds and a nest found 23 May with 3 feathered chicks found in the nest the next day, and four birds (two adults and two juveniles) seen in July. This is a more open area than most locations where birds have

Plate 6. Arabian Magpie *Pica pica asirensisis* nests, Al Mehfar park, Tanoumah, Asir province, Saudi Arabia, 1 June 2016. © *Jem Babbington.* Two new nests made from an oval mass of twigs with a side entrance at c5–6 m above ground at base of forks in an acacia tree.

been seen previously and holds some encouragement that birds may move to and breed in new habitat if their original habitat becomes unsuitable, with these birds resident in the area according to locals (Abdullah Alsuhaibany pers comm). In June 2016 four Arabian Magpie nests were found including two new nests since the last visit in 2014 indicating the birds built new nests each year and bred there (Plate 6). Four birds were seen in the Al Mehfar park area in July 2015 but none were seen in summer 2016. Seven km south of Tanoumah in the valley at Sallal Al Dahna 18° 54' 39.6" N 42° 12' 27.6" E, at a height of 1955 m asl, birds have been seen regularly from 2001 to present (Plates 1–3) with several nests found in 2013, 2014 and 2015. This site has perfect habitat with large mature trees to nest in and a year-round water supply with a small waterfall with a pool below (Plate 4) and in March 2013 a magpie was seen entering a nest structure, with three birds in the same location 5 July 2013 (two adults and a juvenile) indicating breeding had occurred nearby. Other sightings in this core area include four seen ten km south of Tanoumah in December 2014. Thirteen km south of Tanoumah at 18° 51.11' N, 42° 14.48′ E, a wide wadi similar to Sallal Al Dahna but with gently sloping sides, held two birds in 2013 and one was seen flying across the road in June 2014. Twenty-six km south of Tanoumah, near Billasmar, at 18° 47' 07.9" N 42° 14' 40.2" E, a pair of adults and four juveniles were observed in July 2010, near the village of Al Azah at 2606 m asl. The birds were seen in an area of open hillsides with scattered juniper trees and terraced fields with other magpies seen in the same wide valley in 2013. Six magpies were recorded 23 May 2014 six km south of Billasmar at 18° 43' 35.9" N 42° 15' 27.6" E feeding from a rubbish container beside King Faisal road. Interestingly most of the recent sightings of Arabian Magpies have been below the altitude zone 2400–3000 m, mentioned in Madge (2016) and some have been associated with feeding on human leftovers.

In conclusion, *asirensisis* is a taxon with a very restricted range, confined to a small region within Saudi Arabia. Numbers are decreasing probably because of heavy disturbance by tourism and perhaps changes in climate with warmer and drier weather experienced in the Asir mountains in the last few decades (Hasanean & Almazroui 2015). The good rains in the region in spring 2016 coincided with an increase in sightings of birds. The areas where Arabian Magpies have been seen in recent years appear to be restricted to three widely spaced areas, one near Abha with numbers in significant decline, one on the isolated Jebal Gaha where numbers are very low and lastly the main stronghold in the Billasmar, Tanoumah and An Numas areas. Estimating population size in this large and often inaccessible area is difficult, but the small number of recent records of Arabian Magpie and apparent reduction in its already very limited range suggests that the estimated population size of 135–500 pairs is probably too high. Numbers may be significantly less than this estimate with perhaps only 135 pairs or less. The good news is that the species is still breeding in its core area at least, and is found in areas near human habitation, sometimes utilizing waste food. The bad news is that if an action plan is not put in place soon then this taxon may die out entirely.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mike Jennings supplied data on the Arabian Magpie from the ABBA database and M. Zafar-ul Islam (National Wildlife Research Center, Taif) supplied details of the remote camera traps set up in the Asir mountains. Abdullah Alsuhaibany and Chris Boland provided details of sightings from their 2014 surveys of endemics and Mansur Al Fahad, Louis Regenmorter and Brendan Kavanagh gave details of their sightings. Phil Roberts provided company in the field as well as GPS references and altitude data for a number of trips we conducted looking for magpies over the last five years.

LITERATURE CITED

van den Berg, AB. 2014. *Dutch Birding-vogelnamen*. www.dutchbirding.nl/page.php?page_id=229.

Birkhead, TR. 1991. *The Magpies*. T & AD Poyser, London.

Ebels, EB. 2003. Trends in systematics—Speciation in *Pica* magpies. *Dutch Birding* 25(2): 103–116.

Gill, F & D Donsker (eds). 2016. *IOC World Bird List (v 6.1)*. DOI10.14344/IOC.ML.6.1. www.worldbirdnames.org. [Accessed 13 April 2016]

Hasanean, H & M Almazroui. 2015. Rainfall: features and variations over Saudi Arabia, a review. *Climate* 2015, 3(3): 578–626. DOI10.3390/cli3030578.

Jennings, MC. 2010. Atlas of the breeding birds of Arabia. *Fauna of Arabia* 25.

Jennings, MC, ARH Al-Momen & JSY Haresi. 2010. *The birds of the highlands of south-west Saudi Arabia and adjacent parts of the Tihama: July 2010.* ABBA Survey 42. Jennings, UK.

Lee S, CS Parr, Y Hwang, DP Mindell, JC Choe. 2003. Phylogeny of magpies (genus *Pica*) inferred from mtDNA data. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 29: 250–257.

Madge, S. 2016. Arabian Magpie (*Pica asirensis*). *In*: del Hoyo, J, A Elliott, J Sargatal, DA Christie & E de Juana (eds). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, www.hbw.com/node/60754. [Retrieved 13 April 2016]

Madge, S & H Burn. 1993. *Crows and jays: a guide to the crows, jays and magpies of the world.* Helm Information, Robertsbridge, UK.

Yahya, HSA & M Salamah. 1996. The Asir Magpie: results of recent field surveys. *Phoenix* 13: 13–14.

Jem Babbington, c/o Saudi Aramco, PO Box 13007, Dhahran 31311, Saudi Arabia. jembabbington@btinternet.com

First record of Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* in the United Arab Emirates

OSCAR CAMPBELL, MARK SMILES & SIMON LLOYD

Of the three species of black-and-white *Ficedula* flycatchers breeding in Europe and western Asia, only Semi-collared Flycatcher *F. semitorquata* occurs regularly in the United Arab Emirates, where it is an extremely uncommon spring migrant. The UAE bird database contains a total of 117 bird-days for this species, 2004–2014, the majority from 2009 (21%) and 2014 (46%) influxes (Tommy Pedersen *in litt*). All records were from spring migration, with a clear peak in late March and early April (see Figure 1). For this reason, a black-and-white *Ficedula* briefly glimpsed by MS on the edge of Mamzar park, Dubai emirate, 3 October 2015 was most intriguing. An effort was made to relocate the bird on 6 October and images obtained on that date (Plates 1–3) immediately raised alarm bells as to the bird's identity. Despite being both elusive and difficult to view, the bird was seen and photographed again on 9 October (Plates 4, 5). From views in the field and, in particular, the images obtained, the bird was identified as an adult male Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis*. The record was accepted by the Emirates Bird Records Committee (EBRC) and represents the first record of the species in the UAE. It was not seen again after 9 October.

FIELD CHARACTERS AND IDENTIFICATION

The bird's appearance was compared against information in a number of references (Svensson 1992, Harris *et al* 1996, van Duivendijk 2010 and, especially, Mild 1994a, b). The following characters allowed secure aging and identification:

Aging. The rather narrowly-edged tertial feathers, with a narrowing white fringe and no apparent 'step' on the tip of the central tertial, coupled with the very large, broad white patch at the base of the primaries that virtually reached the outermost web strongly indicated an adult male. The obviously black remiges, primary coverts, rectrices and uppertail coverts, strongly contrasting with the brown-grey mantle, nape and crown support this contention.

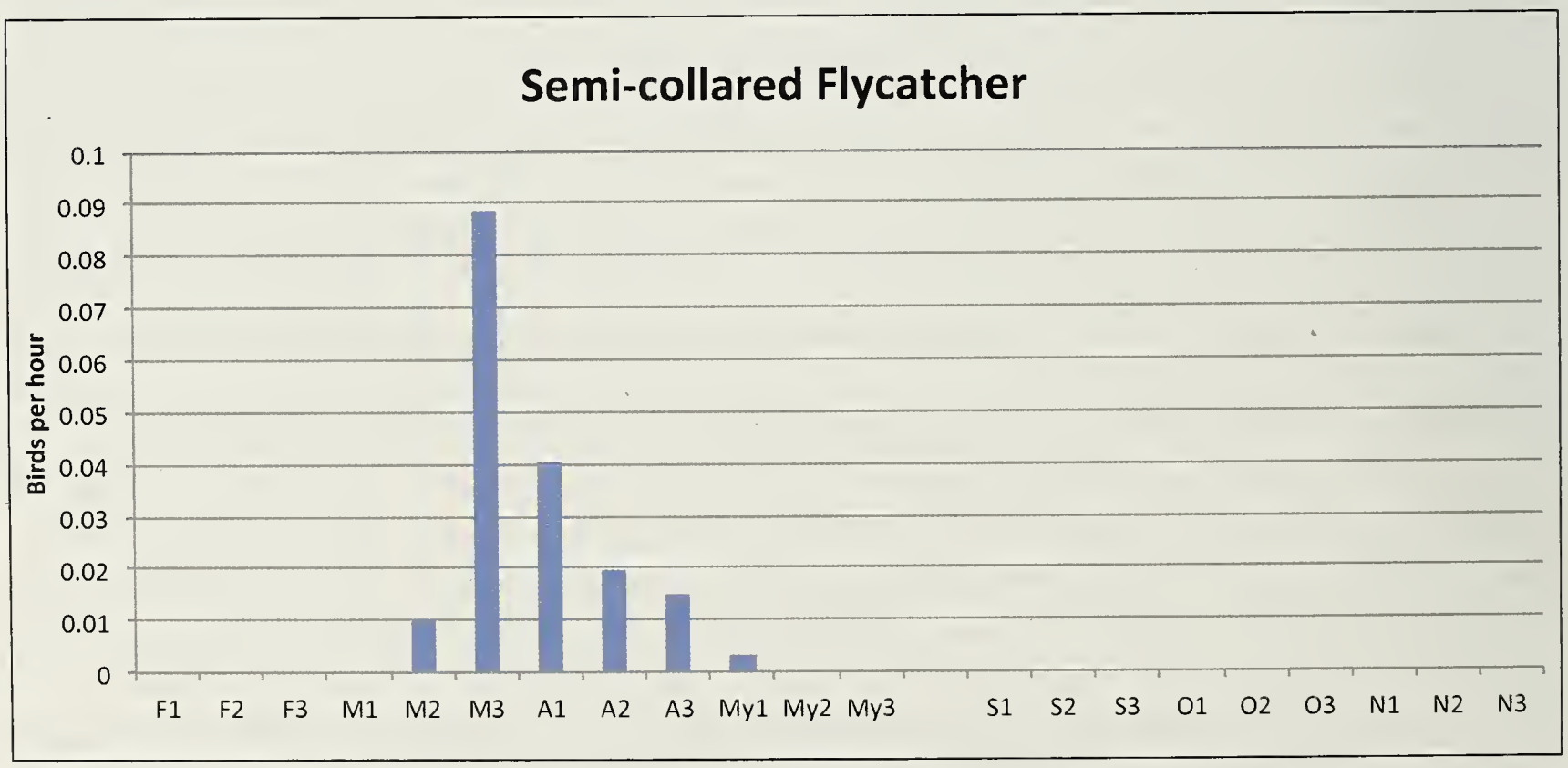


Figure 1. Phenology of Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata* migration through the United Arab Emirates, based on standardized recording 2007–2015. Data from Campbell & Smiles (in prep). Y-axis birds per hour, plotted against 10 day periods (x-axis, F Feb, M Mar, A Apr, My May, S Sep, O Oct, N Nov).

Plates 1 & 2 (above left & right). Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* Mamzár park, Dubai, UAE, 6 October 2015. © *Mark Smiles*

Plate 3 (right). Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* Mamzar park, Dubai, UAE, 6 October 2015. © *Simon Lloyd*

Primary patch. This is both extensive (virtually reaching the wing edge) and broad (greatest extent virtually falling level with the tip of the shortest tertial). This feature strongly points away from Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca* in which the white extends only narrowly, if at all, beyond the primary coverts (Mild 1994a). Semi-collared Flycatcher would be expected to show a (somewhat) smaller white patch, but its extent marginally overlaps with that exhibited by Collared and measurements taken from a trapped bird would be necessary to determine any distinction (Mild 1994b).

Median coverts. These are rather plain grey-brown, entirely lacking obvious white tips that would be expected on Semi-collared Flycatcher. However, a significant minority of adult male Semi-collared lack obvious white tips to the median coverts (Mild 1994b), so this feature, whilst strongly indicative of Collared Flycatcher, is not conclusive.

Tail pattern. This was impossible to analyze in the field but fortunately was captured in photos by SL (Plates 4, 5). There are obvious white edges on the outermost three tail feathers, formed by white outer webs. This pattern is at odds with an adult male Collared Flycatcher in spring, which would be expected to exhibit all-black rectrices. However Collared Flycatcher, rather unusually, replaces its tail feathers in an incomplete, pre-breeding moult carried out in winter quarters (Svensson 1992) and autumn feathers do exhibit white edges. Importantly, there is no suggestion of white on the inner webs of any feathers, a feature typical of most male Semi-collared.

Plates 4 & 5. Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* Mamzar park, Dubai, UAE, 9 October 2015. © *Simon Lloyd*

Other features. The rather obvious, diffuse whitish patch on the forehead, whilst possible on some Semi-collared Flycatchers, is much more typical of Collared. A very diffuse, greyish collar effect, barely evident in images but actually rather more prominent in the field (MS *pers obs*), is apparently never shown by Semi-collared (Mild 1994b). Finally, the obviously blackish remiges and rectrices (already alluded to above) are not exhibited by autumn Pied Flycatchers of any age or sex.

DISCUSSION

Collared Flycatcher breeds in the middle latitudes of Europe, from eastern France to western Russia and winters in east-central Africa to about 20° S (Cramp & Perrins 1993). Many birds, at least from the western part of the breeding range, make a lengthy staging stop in autumn in Italy and then complete a rapid crossing of the Mediterranean and Sahara (Taylor 2016). Consequently, they are rare or very rare during autumn passage at localities such as Cyprus (Richardson 2014) and Israel (Shirihai 1996) where they are relatively common in spring. In the latter country, most years witness no autumn records, although a few tens appear simultaneously in occasional influx years. Bulk of passage is 8–24 September and almost all records refer to first-winters. There was no significant influx of Collared Flycatchers (nor Pied or Semi-collared Flycatchers) in Israel in autumn 2015 (J Meyrav *in litt*). In Cyprus, Richardson (2014) reported no autumn record of Collared Flycatcher during an 11-year study of passerine migrants, compared to 53 records totaling 171 birds in spring. Interestingly, single Collared Flycatchers were reported from Cyprus 29 August and 2 October 2015 (Harrison & Lamsdell 2016). On the Arabian peninsula, the species is even rarer during either migration season; it has been recorded from Tabuk, northwest Saudi Arabia but not further east (Jem Babbington *in litt*). It is unrecorded from Kuwait (Pope & Zogaris 2012) and Oman (Eriksen & Victor 2013). The occurrence of Collared Flycatcher, especially an adult male, in the UAE is clearly somewhat surprising.

Following this record, EBRC decided to review all records of black-and-white *Ficedula* flycatchers other than spring Semi-collared from the UAE. Four such records exist. One, reported as Semi-collared Flycatcher, was at Khalidayh, Abu Dhabi island, 14–15 October 1999 though no documentation exists (EBRC has never asked for substantiation of claims of this species). The other three records concerned Pied Flycatcher. Of these, two previously accepted records (April 1986, September 2007) were considered not proven though one

record, from Mushrif Palace gardens, Abu Dhabi island, 14 May 2003 was upheld. The latter now constitutes the sole record of Pied Flycatcher in the UAE. EBRC now requires documentation for all reports of autumn black-and-white *Ficedula* flycatchers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The late Martin Garner provided useful advice and comments on the initial identification of this bird. Jem Babbington provided useful information on the status of Collared Flycatcher in Saudi Arabia and Jonathon Meyrav helpfully commented on the occurrence of Collared Flycatchers in Israel in autumn 2015. As always, we are grateful to Tommy Pedersen for maintaining and providing information from the UAE bird database.

LITERATURE CITED

Campbell, O & M Smiles (in prep). A comparison of spring and autumn migration through the United Arab Emirates.

Cramp, S & CM Perrins (eds). 1993. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Vol 7. Oxford University Press, UK.

van Duivendijk, N. 2010. *Advanced Bird ID Guide*. New Holland, London.

Eriksen, J & R Victor. 2013. *Oman Bird List*. 7th edn. Centre for Environmental Studies and Research, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat.

Harris, A, H Shirihai & D Christie. 1996. *Birder's Guide to European and Middle Eastern Birds*. Macmillan, London.

Harrison, I & C Lamsdell. 2016. Around the Region. *Sandgrouse* 38: 130–143.

Mild, K. 1994a. Field identification of Pied, Collared and Semi-collared Flycatchers. Part 1: males in breeding plumage. *Birding World* 7: 139–151.

Mild, K. 1994b. Field identification of Pied, Collared and Semi-collared Flycatchers. Part 3: first-winters and non-breeding plumage. *Birding World* 7: 325–334.

Pope, M & S Zogaris (eds). 2012. *Birds of Kuwait*. Biodiversity East, Nicosia.

Richardson, C. 2014. The status, frequency and abundance of passerine passage migrants and seasonal visitors in Cyprus 2003–2013. *Sandgrouse* 36: 197–236.

Shirihai, H. 1996. *The Birds of Israel*. Academic Press, London.

Svensson, L. 1992. *Identification guide to European passerines*. Privately published, Stockholm.

Taylor, B. 2016. Collared Flycatcher (*Ficedula albicollis*). *In*: del Hoyo, J, A Elliott, J Sargatal, DA Christie & E de Juana (eds). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. [Retrieved hbw.com/node/59049 19 February 2016]

Oscar Campbell, c/o British School Al Khubairat, PO Box 4001, Abu Dhabi, UAE. ojcampbell25@yahoo.com

Mark Smiles, PO Box 17836, Dubai, UAE. marksmiles63@gmail.com

Simon Lloyd, c/o British School Al Khubairat, PO Box 4001, Abu Dhabi, UAE. simonpeterlloyd@googlemail.com

First breeding record of Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and apparent breeding of White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, for Iraq

LAITH ALI AL-OBEIDI

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

On 28 May 2012, Richard Porter and I found a pair of Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* in Chami Razan area (35° 48′ 31″ N, 45° 01′ 18″ E, Figure 1) 47 km northwest of Sulaimani city, Iraqi Kurdistan. They were collecting food in low vegetation in an overgrown wooded stream. We watched them for at least an hour during which time they took invertebrates into the same spot in a patch of tangled sedge and other vegetation. At least five visits by each bird were made, carrying invertebrates. This seems to be the first breeding record in Iraq of this species (Ararat *et al* 2011, Salim *et al* 2012). A few days later, on 31 May 2012, RP found a pair of Sedge Warblers and heard three singing males in riverine vegetation, including reeds, in Mawat area (35° 56′ 21″ N, 45° 22′ 57″ E, Figure 1), 44 km north of Sulaimani city and close to the Iranian border.

Figure 1. Map of Iraq showing locations mentioned in text. The red symbols show Chami Razan and Mawat (in north), Zichri marsh and Baghdadiya lake (Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*). The green symbol indicates the Zichri area (White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*).

There were some other interesting Sedge Warbler findings. On 15 May 2015, accompanied by Samad Ali and a boat driver, I found two pairs in the Central marshes, southern Iraq (Figure 1). The first pair was in Zichri marsh (31° 05′ 51″ N, 47° 07′ 23″ E), Thi-Qar governorate. I saw the second pair, at Baghdadiya lake (31° 01′ 51″ N, 47° 01′ 58″ E), Chibaish district, Thi-Qar governorate. The latter male (Plate 1) caught my attention by its loud singing. It was perching over a sedge plant. We moved the boat near it and it moved to other plants. The female was inside the vegetation and it followed the male. I spent 15 minutes watching the pair, photographing and taking notes.

Plate 1. Singing male Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* 15 May 2015, Baghdadiya lake, Chibaish district, southern Iraq. © *Laith Ali Al-Obeidi*

WHITE-CROWNED WHEATEAR

Oenanthe leucopyga

As part of a joint project between Nature Iraq and BirdLife International (AVJC Foundation project), surveys were conducted in the Central marshes in the summers and winters of 2014 and 2015. On 26 May 2014, I used a driver to visit the

Plate 2. White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, *c*30–35 days old, 26 May 2014, Zichri area, Al-Mdeina district, southern Iraq. © *Laith Ali Al-Obeidi*

Plate 3. White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, c30–35 days old, 26 May 2014, Zichri area, Al-Mdeina district, southern Iraq. © *Laith Ali Al-Obeidi*

Zichri area (Figure 1), Basra governorate, southern Iraq. At an earth embankment (#712), which represents the eastern boundary of the Central marshes, I found a juvenile White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* (at 31° 06′ 29″ N, 47°13′ 23″ E). I managed to get *c*8–15 m from it and the observation, including photography, took 20 minutes (Plates 2, 3).

The bird lacked a white cap and had no bluish gloss on its body. It was confirmed as a juvenile from my photos and description by RP. It was *c*30–35 days old, and in view of the mainly sedentary nature of this species it must have bred in Iraq (Peter Castell *in litt* to RP). Pälfery (1988) noted "In Arabia [eastern Saudi Arabia] in 1986, the first young hatched at the beginning of March and fledged a fortnight later. After fledging they were fed by the adults for a further three weeks until they became independent. They then moved out of the nesting area and occupied areas on the fringes of their parents' territories." There have been no breeding records of White-crowned Wheatear in Iraq (Ararat *et al* 2011, Salim *et al* 2012). The species was first recorded in Iraq in winter 2010 (Salim 2010). It is a breeding resident in Saudi Arabia (Jennings *et al* 2009) and a common resident in southern and western Jordan (Andrews *et al* 1999, Shirihai *et al* 1999). Additionally, the species has been recorded twice in Syria (Murdoch & Betton 2008), is rare in Kuwait (Al-Sirhan 2016) and is a vagrant to Iran (Scott & Adhami 2006).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to my Nature Iraq colleagues for their continuous support. Sharif Jbour was very supportive and Samad Ali assisted. Special thanks to Richard Porter for his guidance and advice. The AVCJ Foundation made the surveys possible in 2014/2015.

LITERATURE CITED

Al-Sirhan, A. 2016. *Kuwait annotated checklist of birds*. http://birdsofkuwait.com/annotated_checklist.shtml. [Accessed 7 June 2016]

Andrews, IJ, F Khoury & H Shirihai. 1999. Jordan Bird Report 1995–97. *Sandgrouse* 21(1): 10–35.

Ararat, K, O Fadhil, RF Porter & M Salim. 2011. Breeding birds in Iraq: important new discoveries. *Sandgrouse* 33(1):12–33.

Jennings MC, MI Al Salamah, B Abu Qabous & HN Al Subaie. 2009. *Wintering birds in northern Saudi Arabia: February 2009* (ABBA survey 40). Jennings, UK.

Murdoch, DA & KF Betton. 2008. A checklist of the birds of Syria. *Sandgrouse* Supplement 2.

Palfery, J. 1988.Observations on the behavior of the White-Crowned Black Wheatear in Eastern Arabia. *Sandgrouse* 10: 1–25.

Salim, MA. 2010. First record of White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* for Iraq. *Sandgrouse* 32(2): 149–150.

Salim, MA, OF Al-Sheikhly, KA Majeed & RF Porter. 2012. An annotated checklist of the birds of Iraq. *Sandgrouse* 34(1): 4–43.

Scott, DA & A Adhami. 2006. An updated checklist of the birds of Iran. *Podoces* 1(1/2): 1–16.

Shirihai, H, IJ Andrews, GM Kirwan & P Davidson. 1999. A checklist of the birds of Israel and Jordan. *Sandgrouse* 21(1): 36–44.

Laith Ali Al-Obeidi, Nature Iraq, Iraq. Laith.Ali.NI@gmail.com Laith.ali@natureiraq.org

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*: further evidence of occurrence in Afghanistan

MARK MALLALIEU & RICHARD SEARGENT

On 8 October 2009, whilst on a posting in Helmand province, Afghanistan, RS photographed a bird that he assumed to be a Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus*. The bird was in a marshy area within the Camp Bastion military base. In October 2015, Tim Worfolk (pers comm) pointed out to MM that the photo, which RJS had uploaded to Flickr (www.flickr.com/photos/armybirding/7453376118/in/photostream/), actually shows a male Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*. Diagnostic identification features included rufous edges to tertials and secondaries, lack of extensive black over the fore-crown and relatively short tail. Bay-backed Shrike would also show obvious white marks on the bases to the primaries, lacking in most Red-backed. The record predates the 2013 and 2014 observations of Red-backed Shrike described by Mallalieu & Kaestner (2015), thought to be the first for this species in Afghanistan. Anssi Kullberg (pers comm) has also reported seeing a Red-backed Shrike in Bamyan province in September 2012, though was unable to photograph it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Tim Worfolk for drawing our attention to RS's photo.

LITERATURE CITED

Mallalieu, M & P Kaestner. 2015. Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio*: first record(s) for Afghanistan. *Sandgrouse* 37(2): 169–170.

Mark Mallalieu, 29 Cobbetts Mead, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3TQ, UK. mallalieum@gmail.com

Richard J Seargent, 4 Yetminster Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 6QY, UK. RichardSeargent@aol.com

First documented record of White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* in Syria and records there of Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti annae* and Basalt Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens warriae*, all 2009

NICOLAS MARTINEZ, ADEEB AL-ASSAD, DANIEL MATTI, TOBIAS ROTH, DORIS STALLING & THOMAS STALLING

WHITE-CROWNED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe leucopyga*

During a birdwatching trip to Syria in 2009 we explored the black basalt desert east of Jebel Druze in southernmost Syria for a day. While driving through the basalt desert 27 February (Plate 1), DS spotted a 'black and white' wheatear sitting by the road on top of a stone (32° 54′ 09.1″ N, 37° 19′ 05.2″ E, As Zalaf, Rif Dimashq, Syria). As the bird was white capped we immediately identified it as White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*. The bird was seen for a few minutes before it disappeared, though we found the bird again at the same place two hours and several heavy rainfalls later. All authors observed it and we managed to get several pictures both before and after the rain (Plates 2, 3, both post rain). During the observation we noted: a rather large and narrow-billed black wheatear with white crown and white undertail coverts. White on the belly was restricted to between undertail coverts and legs, tail strikingly white except for black central rectrices. A few rectrices were completely white, whereas others had small inconspicuous black spots at the tips. Clearly an adult White-crowned Wheatear. The bird was actively foraging and moved around for several hundred metres during our observations. It mostly sat on the top of small stones and clay hillocks.

This appears to be the first documented record of White-crowned Wheatear for Syria. There are two earlier reports from near Palmyra: one Douara cliffs 17 November 2001 and

Plate 1. Boulder field in basalt desert, southern Syria, 27 February 2009. © *N Martinez*

Plate 2. Adult White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, southern Syria, 27 February 2009. © *T Roth*

Plate 3. Adult White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* showing diagnostic tail pattern, southern Syria, 27 February 2009. © *N Martinez*

one Talila 16 March 2004 (Serra *et al* 2005). As there were no descriptions available, Murdoch & Betton (2008) did not include the species on the Syrian list. The species is a resident breeder in Israel, Palestine and Jordan (Porter *et al* 2004) with a recent northward range extension during which it colonised the Al-Harra basalt desert of Jordan, the extension of the basalt desert of southern Syria (Andrews *et al* 1998, Khoury *et al* 2010). It was frequently found on the Jordanian side of the basalt desert in 2008 (Khoury *et al* 2010) so a record from the Syrian part of the same desert *c*30 km from the border is not surprising. It is likely that the species occurs in southern Syria as a breeding bird. This hypothesis is supported by the statement of a local shepherd encountered shortly after our observation of the White-crowned Wheatear. Showing him the colour plates in Porter *et al* (2004), he recognised the species by referring to the white cap and told us, that it regularly occurs in the area. Since he also recognised the superficially similar Basalt Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens warriae* in the book, we assume he indeed meant *O. leucopyga*. The White-crowned Wheatear is a vagrant to several countries neighbouring Syria. Cyprus: seven records, first 1970, last 2008 (C Richardson pers comm). Turkey: three records, two Mediterranean coast (1993, 1996) and one central Antalya province 2005 (Kirwan *et al* 2008, E Yoğurtcuoğlu pers comm). Lebanon: not recorded before 2008 (Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008) but apparently one new record 14–15 September 2015 (Harrison & Lamsdell 2016). Iraq: one record of immature Sawa lake, central Iraq, 19 February 2010 (Salim 2010).

DESERT LARK *Ammomanes deserti annae*, **BASALT WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe lugens warriae*

The basalt desert of Jordan and Syria (Plate 1) holds two endemic and distinct dark subspecies. Little is known of the distribution of Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti annae* (Plate 5, see also Plate 4) and Basalt Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens warriae* (Plate 6) in the Syrian part of the basalt desert. *A. d. annae* was seen and photographed by us at several locations between 32° 42′ 02.7″ N, 36° 54′ 10.3″ E and 32° 55′ 55.29″ N, 37° 20′ 50.9″ E and noted

Plate 4. Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti coxi* 25 February 2009, Zenobia, central Syria. © *N Martinez*

Plate 5. Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti annae* 27 February 2009, basalt desert east of As Suwayda, southern Syria. © *N Martinez*

Plate 6. Basalt Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens warriae*, 2 cy male, 27 February 2009, basalt desert east of As Suwayda, southern Syria. © *N Martinez*

Plate 7. Wadi in basalt desert (32° 42' 02.7" N, 36° 54' 10.3" E, southern Syria) where we found a pair of Basalt Wheatears, 27 February 2009. © *D Matti*

as common. Our observations suggest that the subspecies regularly occurs in the Syrian part of the desert.

Our observations of Basalt Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens warriae* were included in Khoury *et al* (2010). In total we found 5 different Basalt Wheatears: one pair at wadi cliffs (32° 42′ 02.7″ N, 36° 54′ 10.3″ E, Plate 7) with the male, a first summer, singing and reacting to a taped song of ssp *lugens*; and three singles close to the road between 32° 42′ 02.7″ N, 36° 54′ 10.3″ E and 32° 55′ 55.29″ N, 37° 20′ 50.9″ E.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank David Murdoch for helpful advice concerning birding areas in Syria. Emin Yoğurtcuoğlu and Colin Richardson gave information concerning records of White-crowned Wheatear in neighbouring countries and Fares Khoury and Hadoram Shirihai discussed Basalt Wheatear. A reviewer gave valuable comments on an earlier version of the ms. During our visit to Syria we benefited from very welcoming and helpful people all over the country. We sincerely hope that the situation will improve for its inhabitants and that it will be a safe place in the near future.

LITERATURE CITED

Andrews, IJ, F Khoury & H Shirihai. 1998. Jordan Bird Report 1995–1997. *Sandgrouse* 21: 10–35.

Harrison, I & C Lamsdell. 2016. Around the region. *Sandgrouse* 38: 130–143.

Khoury, F, MI Förschler, M Janaydeh, M Aliabadian & AR Al-Hmoud. 2010. Distribution, habitat and differentiation of the poorly-known black morph of Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens lugens* in Jordan. *Sandgrouse* 32: 113–119.

Kirwan, GM, K Boyla, P Castell, B Demirci, M Özen, H Welch & T Marlow. 2008. *The Birds of Turkey*. Christopher Helm, London.

Murdoch, DA & KF Betton. 2008. A checklist of the birds of Syria. *Sandgrouse* supplement 2.

Porter, RF, S Christensen & P Schiermacker-Hansen. 2004. *The Birds of the Middle East*. Princeton, NJ.

Ramadan-Jaradi, G, T Bara & M Ramadan-Jaradi. 2008. Revised checklist of the birds of Lebanon 1999. *Sandgrouse* 30(1): 22–69.

Salim, M. 2010. First record of White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* for Iraq. *Sandgrouse* 32(2): 149–151.

Serra, G, M Abdallah, A Al-Asaed, G Al-Qaim & AK Abdallah. 2005. A long-term bird survey in the central Syrian desert (2000–2003) part 1. *Sandgrouse* 27: 9–23.

Nicolas Martinez, Tobias Roth & Thomas Stalling, Hintermann & Weber AG, Austrasse 2a, 4153 Reinach, Switzerland. nicolas.martinez44@yahoo.de

Adeeb Al-Asaad, Syria.

Daniel Matti, Leigrubenstrasse 14, 4313 Möhlin, Switzerland.

Doris Stalling, Möndenweg 26, 79594 Inzlingen, Germany.

Historical example of egg-collection by man of Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* eggs on lake Karakul, former Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic

ROLF NESSING

The Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* is a monotypic species with a global population of 52 000–60 000 individuals in the wild (Wetlands International 2015). The Bar-headed Goose breeds in various wetlands on the high plateaus of central Asia, exhibiting a discontinuous breeding range extending from Kyrgyzstan to central China as far north as Mongolia (Fomin & Bold 1991, Wurdinger 2005, Batbayar *et al* 2014), and from the Tian Shan mountains (Ma & Cai 1997, Ming & Dai 1999) as far as Ladakh (Prins & Wieren 2004) and Kokonor, Qinghai (Schäfer 1938, Scott & Klös 1961).

There appears to be no detailed information on the current status of *A. indicus* in the western part of its breeding range, in central Asian parts of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Soviet authors stated that, although the bird was once fairly common it had suffered a severe decline (Gole 1982). There was a maximum of 100 breeding pairs in Tajikistan (van der Ven in Miyabayashi & Mundkur 1999). Around 1971, no more than 1000 individuals lived in the then known areas of occurrence in the Soviet Union—Tajik SSR (lakes Karakul, Zorkul), Kirghiz SSR (lakes Sonkul, Chatyrkul), Gorno-Altai (lake Ukok) and Tuva

Plate 1. Raft crossing to the Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* breeding grounds on lake Karakul, Tajikistan, 1963 or 1964. © *Daler Kaziev*

Plate 2. A Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* nest, lake Karakul, Tajikistan, 1963 or 1964. © *Daler Kaziev*

Plate 3. Delight at the results of collecting Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* eggs, lake Karakul, Tajikistan, 1963 or 1964. © *Daler Kaziev*

Plate 4. The Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* eggs collected were transported in a wooden crate (here empty, evidently on the outward journey), lake Karakul, Tajikistan, 1963 or 1964. © *Daler Kaziev*

(Boehme 1981). The Bar-headed Goose was included in the first Soviet Union Red List (Krasnaja Kniga 1978). Human persecution during migration and habitat loss at stopover and wintering sites are commonly regarded as the most serious threats (Köppen *et al* 2010).

The accompanying historical photographs (Plates 1–4), taken in 1963 or 1964, show egg collection in a Bar-headed Goose colony on lake Karakul (39° 00′ N, 73° 30′ E) in the northeast of the Tajik SSR (today Tajikistan). The lake is currently managed within the Tajik national park and as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention (BirdLife International 2015).

Plate 1 shows local people using a home-made raft constructed from pneumatic tyres and with spades as paddles, navigating to the islands in lake Karakul to collect Bar-headed Goose eggs. Plate 2 shows a clutch of at least 7 eggs. Plate 3 evidently shows the collection total of at least 72 eggs, which must therefore have originated from at least a dozen clutches. Daler Kaziev (pers comm 2014) was informed by his mother, a wife of one of the egg-collectors, that the Bar-headed Goose eggs were later cooked and eaten. BirdLife International (2015) refers to 25–50 breeding pairs at lake Karakul 2002–2006, although the current population size appears unknown. I saw on an island in the lake, 11 June 2015, a breeding Bar-headed Goose and a flying pair.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to Daler Kaziev (Murgab, Tajikistan and Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan) for provision of the photographs and further information.

LITERATURE CITED

Batbayar, N, JY Takekawa, T Natsagdorj, KA Spragens & X Xiao. 2014. Site selection and nest survival of the Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*) on the Mongolian Plateau. *Waterbirds* 37(4): 381–393.

BirdLife International. 2015. *Important Bird Areas factsheet: Karakul lake and mountains.* www.birdlife.org. [Accessed 21 March 2015]

Boehme, RL. 1981. [*Birds of Forest and Mountain of the Soviet Union*]. Moscow. [In Russian]

Fomin, VE & A Bold. 1991. [*Catalogue of birds of the Mongolian People's Republic.*] Nauka, Moscow. [In Russian]

Gole, P. 1982. Status of *Anser indicus* in Asia with special reference to India. *Aquila* 89: 141–149.

Köppen, U, AP Yakovlev, R Barth, M Kaatz & P Berthold. 2010. Seasonal migrations of four individual bar-headed geese *Anser indicus* from Kyrgyzstan followed by satellite telemetry. *Journal of Ornithology* 151(3): 703–712.

Krasnaja Kniga CCCP [*Red Book of the Soviet Union*]. 1978. Izdatelsvo 'Lesnaja Pomyshlennost', Moscow. [In Russian]

Ma, M & D Cai. 1997. Aggregated distribution of *Anser indicus* nest in Bayinbuluke of Tianshan Mountains and its breeding ecology. *Chinese Journal of Applied Ecology* 8: 287–290.

Ming, M & C Dai. 1999. Breeding ecology of Barheaded Goose in Tianshan, Xinjiang. *Casarca* 5: 177–181.

Miyabayashi, Y & T Mundkur. 1999. *Atlas of Key Sites for Anatidae in the East Asian Flyway.* Wetlands International, www.jawgp.org/anet/aaa1999/aaaendx.htm. [Accessed 4 December 2014]

Prins, HH & SEV Wieren. 2004. Number, population structure, and habitat use of bar-headed geese *Anser indicus* in Ladakh (India) during the brood rearing period. *Acta Zoologica Sinica* 50: 738–744.

Schäfer, E. 1938. Ornithologische Ergebnisse zweier Forschungsreisen nach Tibet. *Journal für Ornithologie* 86 Sonderheft.

Scott, P & HG Klös. 1961. *Das Wassergefliigel der Welt.* Hamburg/Berlin.

Wetlands International 2015. *Waterbird Population Estimates.* wpe.wetlands.org. [Accessed 21 March 2015]

Wurdinger, I. 2005. Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus. In*: Kear J (ed). *Bird Families of the World: Ducks, Geese and Swans.* Oxford University Press, UK.

Rolf Nessing, Clara-Zetkin-Strasse 16, D-17279 Lychen, Germany. RONES@t-online.de

The Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas of the Socotra archipelago, Yemen

RF PORTER & AHMED SAEED SULEIMAN

Lying some 350 km south of the Yemen mainland, the Socotra archipelago (Figures 1, 2) is internationally renowned for its plant and animal biodiversity as well as its cultural richness, with the inhabitants speaking the unique Socotri language (Cheung & DeVantier 2006). For birds, it has one globally endangered breeding species (Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*), four globally vulnerable breeding species (Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*, Socotra Buzzard *Buteo socotraensis*, Abd Al Kuri Sparrow *Passer*

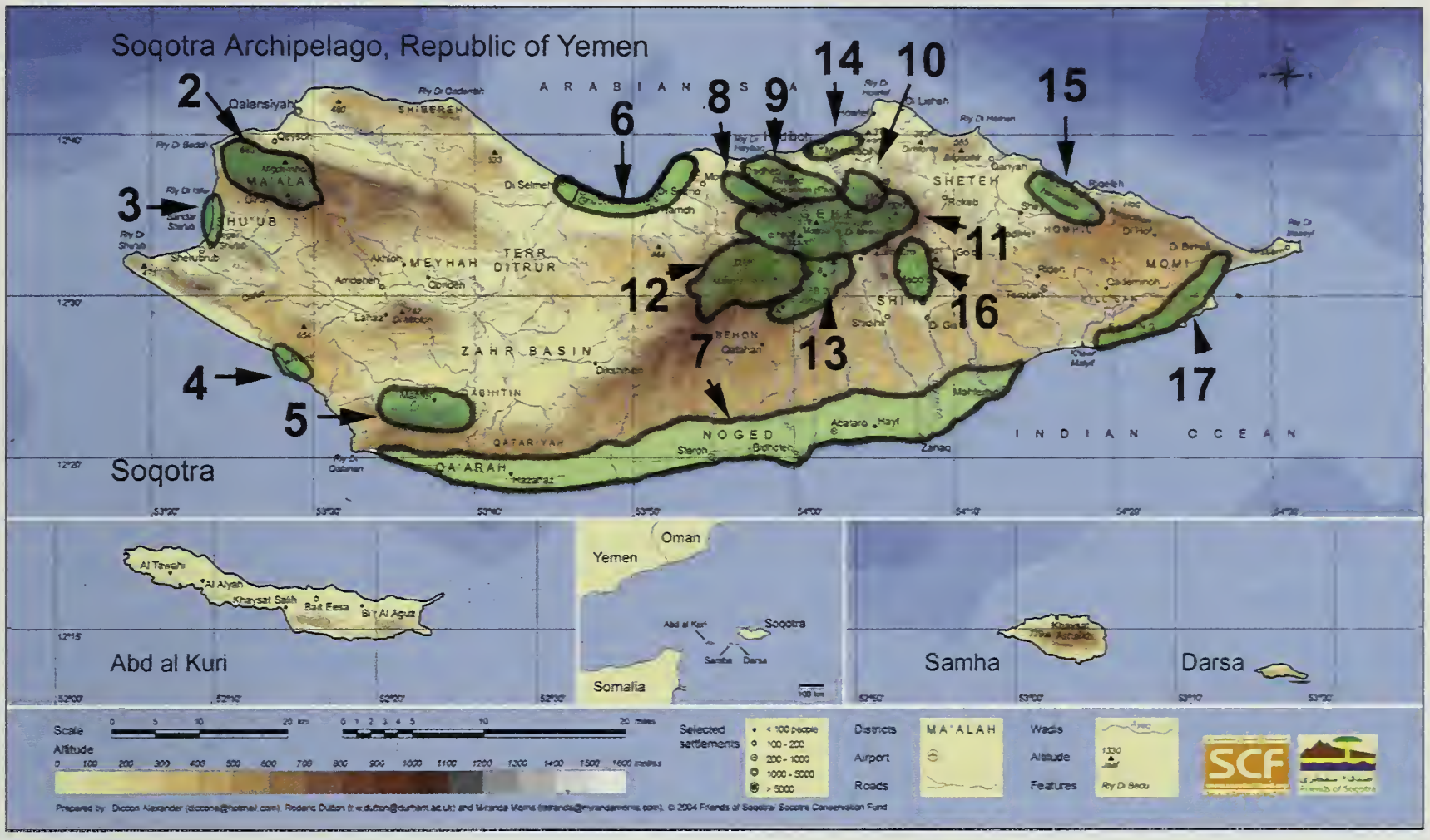


Figure 1. The Socotra archipelago includes the main island (Socotra *ie* 'Soqotra') and three satellite islands, Abd Al Kuri, Samha and Darsa. Location of IBAs 2–17, on the main island, are shown: 2 Jabal Ma'alah, 3 Shu'ub, 4 Neet, 5 Limestone plateau above Siko village, 6 North coastal plain: airport to Di Selmeho/Ghubbah, 7 Noged Plain, 8 Wadi Ayhaft, 9 North slopes of the Haggeher mountains, 10 Wadi Di Negehen, 11 Haggeher, 12 Diksam, 13 Firmihin near Jabal Keseslah, 14 Hadiboh estuaries of Hadiboh, Sheck and Sirhan, 15 Hamadero Plateau and Scarp, 16 Wadi Merkoh, 17 Falang–Momi coast and cliffs.

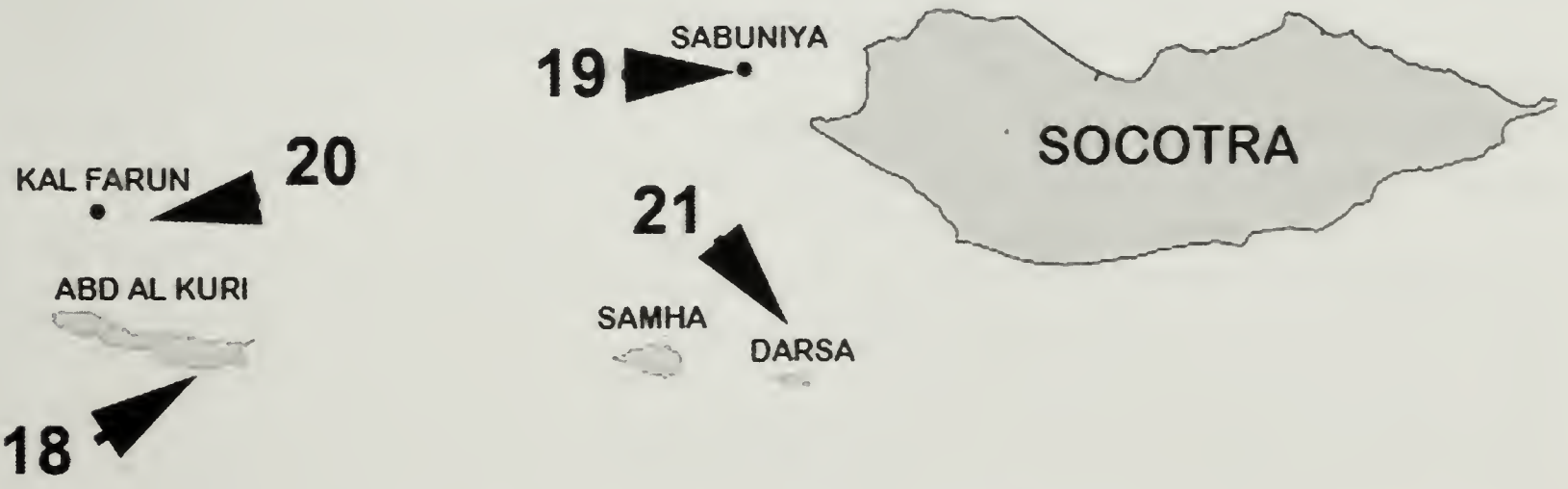


Figure 2. The Socotra archipelago comprises the main island (Socotra), three satellite islands (Abd Al Kuri, Samha, Darsa) and the sea stacks of Sabuniya and Kal Farun (of two stacks aka Ka'l Pharoehs). IBAs of the satellite islands and sea stacks are indicated: 18 Abd al-Kuri, 19 Sabuniya, 20 Kal Farun, 21 Darsa.

hemileucus and Socotra Bunting *Emberiza socotrana*) and ten endemic species. The latter resulted in the Socotra archipelago being designated an endemic bird area EBA by BirdLife International (2016). Table 1 lists the breeding birds, their population and conservation Red List status.

Table 1. The breeding birds of the Socotra archipelago, Yemen, with 2016 Red List status (E endangered, VU vulnerable, NT near threatened; those not labelled are least concern) and population estimates (number of individuals, after Porter & Suleiman 2013, 2014).

Persian Shearwater *Puffinus persicus*, probably >10 000
Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax* NT, endemic breeder, probably > 4000
Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, probably has bred
Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*, probably >1600
Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*, probably breeds, <5
Striated Heron *Butorides striata*, probably breeds, <20
Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*, may breed (present throughout year), <20
Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, may breed (present throughout year), <50
Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*, probably >2600
Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, probably >4000
Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* V, 6000–12 000
Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, <150
Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* E, *c*1900
Socotra Buzzard *Buteo socotraensis* V, Figure 3, endemic, *c*800
Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, *c*700
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, *c*100
Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, has bred at least once
Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, *c*300
Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, *c*300
Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*, *c*1000
Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*, *c*5000
Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii*, probably >2000
Saunders's Tern *Sternula saundersi*, *c*1000
Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*, probably *c*2000
Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii*, *c*2200
Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia* forma *domestica*, introduced, >10
Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis*, *c*167 000
Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia*, *c*7900
White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*, <200
Socotra Scops Owl *Otus socotranus*, Figure 4, endemic, >2000
Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus*, <200
Forbes-Watson's Swift *Apus berliozi*, near endemic, <1000
Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*, *c*26 000
House Crow *Corvus splendens*, accidentally introduced, bred, now eradicated
Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*, *c*1500
Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*, *c*191 600
Pale Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta*, <200.
Socotra Cisticola *Cisticola haesitatus* NT, Figure 5, endemic, *c*9000
Socotra Warbler *Cisticola incanus*, Figure 6, endemic, *c*27 000
Abyssinian White-eye *Zosterops abyssinicus*, *c*28 000
Somali Starling *Onychognathus blythii*, *c*102 000

Socotra Starling *Onychognathus frater*, Figure 7, endemic, *c*25 000
Socotra Sunbird *Chalcomitra balfouri*, Figure 8, endemic, *c*66 000
Socotra Sparrow *Passer insularis*, Figure 9, endemic, *c*330 000
Abd Al-Kuri Sparrow *Passer hemileucus* V, endemic, <1000
Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*, *c*95 000
Socotra Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus*, Figure 10, endemic, *c*17 000
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi*, *c*38 000
Socotra Bunting *Emberiza socotrana* V, Figure 11, endemic, *c*3800

The important bird areas IBAs of Yemen were chronicled in Evans (1994). The identification of those on the Socotra archipelago was based largely on the OSME survey of 1993 (Porter & Martins 1996) and botanical surveys by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (later published in Miller & Morris 2004). Since then bird and habitat surveys led by BirdLife International and Yemen's Environment Protection Authority have greatly increased our knowledge of the status of birds on the archipelago, especially the distribution and populations of breeding species (Porter & Suleiman 2011, 2013, 2014).

In light of the new information gathered, as well as revisions by BirdLife of the IBA selection criteria (Table 2), we have made a complete reassessment of the archipelago's important sites for birds and this is reported below. This site data has now been submitted to BirdLife International for ratification and entry into their global IBA database. It should be noted that the name 'Important Bird and Biodiversity Area' was adopted in place of 'Important Bird Area' by the BirdLife World Congress in Canada in 2014, but the acronym IBA was retained. The main aim of an IBA programme is to promote the protection of IBAs, and the provision of convincing bird data is an essential part of any argument for statutory protection and management.

In July 2003 the Socotra archipelago was named as the first UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve for Yemen. In 2007, when Yemen joined the Ramsar Convention, Socotra's Qalansiyah lagoon was the nominated specimen site. Due to limited data no attempt has

Table 2. Criteria for determining Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (www.birdlife.org/datazone/info/ibacrit-glob).

A1. Species of global conservation concern
The site regularly holds significant numbers of a globally threatened species, or other species of global conservation concern.

A2. Restricted-range species
The site is known or thought to hold a significant component of the restricted-range species whose breeding distributions define an Endemic Bird Area (EBA) or Secondary Area (SA).

A3. Biome-restricted species
The site is known or thought to hold a significant assemblage of the species whose breeding distributions are largely or wholly confined to one biome.

A4. Congregations
i.The site is known or thought to hold, on a regular basis, ≥ 1% of a biogeographic population of a congregatory waterbird species.

ii. The site is known or thought to hold, on a regular basis, ≥ 1% of the global population of a congregatory seabird or terrestrial species.

iii. The site is known or thought to hold, on a regular basis, ≥ 20 000 waterbirds or ≥ 10 000 pairs of seabird of one or more species.

iv. The site is known or thought to be a 'bottleneck' site where at least 20 000 storks (Ciconiidae), raptors (Accipitriformes, Falconiformes) or cranes (Gruidae) regularly pass during spring or autumn migration.

---

been made by us to catalogue important marine areas in the rich seas around Socotra that are feeding areas for many seabirds, including the globally near-threatened Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax* for which Socotra provides the only known breeding site. The archipelago's seas are very rich in fish, cetaceans and turtles (Cheung & DeVantier 2006).

METHODS

The selection of IBAs is achieved by applying quantitative ornithological criteria, based on up-to-date knowledge of the sizes and trends of bird populations. The criteria (Table 2) ensure that the sites selected as IBAs have true significance for the international conservation of bird populations, and provide a common currency for all IBAs, thus creating national, continental and global consistency and comparability (BirdLife International 2014). It is crucial to understand why a site is important, and to do this it is necessary to examine its international significance in terms of the presence and abundance of species that occur, year round or seasonally. Thus a set of four categories and criteria are used to assess the significance of the site globally.

Systematic surveys led by BLI and Yemen's EPA of the birds of the archipelago provided the data for this IBA exercise. Between 1999 and 2011 nine surveys (all between October and March) were undertaken with the main aim of mapping and assessing the breeding bird populations. Over 385 km of transects were made throughout the main island, Socotra, covering nearly all its 1/10th degree squares, and in all habitat types and altitudes. These comprehensive data enabled the selection of the most important sites and areas for birds. In addition, from 1999–2007, six visits were made to the outer islands (Abd Al Kuri, Samha and Darsa) and the sea stacks of Sabuniya and Kal Farun largely under the auspices of Yemen's EPA (Al-Saghier *et al* 2000, Suleiman *et al* 2005, 2007). In 2009 Sabuniya was visited again (Holmstrom & Stahle 2010). For regional and global bird populations, data in Jennings (2010) and Mallon *et al* (2015) were used.

RESULTS

The 21 IBAs listed below are now proposed by us for the Socotra archipelago (in several cases they are similar to, or incorporate those, in Evans 1994, Table 3, and where relevant this is clearly stated). The locations of these IBAs, except IBA 1, are shown in Figures 1 and 2. Detailed maps delineating the sites have been lodged with BLI, Yemen's EPA, Friends of Socotra and OSME. Population figures in the accounts are given for globally threatened and near-threatened species and are calculated from the database for Porter & Suleiman (2013, 2014). Place name spellings are those recommended by Friends of Socotra, and supersede those used by Evans (1994, Table 3) and the site descriptions, where appropriate, are based on those in Evans (1994). Bird scientific names are given in Table 1.

Table 3. Evans (1994) identified 22 IBAs in the Socotra archipelago. Their numbers and names, from Evans (1994), are presented.

035	Qalansiya lagoon
036	Jabal Ma'lih escarpment/Badiya Qalansiya
037	Ra's Hebaq
038	Airport dunes
039	Muqadrihon pass
040	Shidahah
041	Wadi Ayhaft
042	Rewgid and Regid plateaux
043	Jabal Jef
044	Rookib hills
045	Hamaderoh plateau and scarp
046	Coast of Bindar Di-Sha'b
047	Hajhir mountains
048	Firjih/Central Socotra
049	Di-Ishal foothills
050	Diksam
051	Ra's Momi and Fikhah
052	Firmihin near Jabal Keseslah
053	Noged plain
054	Sabuniya and Ka'l Fir'awn
055	Abd al-Kuri
056	Al-Ikhwan

IBA 1. 'Jouanin's Petrel Cliffs'

New IBA

A newly identified site since Evans (1994); first surveyed in 2000, qualifies under A1, A4ii.

No location or location name is given for reasons of security as it is the only known breeding colony of the globally near-threatened Jouanin's Petrel in the world (Taleb 2002). The population is probably >4000 individuals. It is a regular loafing area for flocks of the globally vulnerable Socotra Cormorant.

Threats: none known.

IBA 2. Jabal Ma'alah/Ma'alah Plateau

Evans IBA 036 (inclusion in Evans 1994 was based on its IBA potential through habitat composition and richness for endemic plants).

12° 38′ N, 53° 29′ E, *c*25 km^2. Plate 1. Area surveyed 2000–2006, qualifies under A1, A2.

An upland limestone plateau in northwest Socotra, rising from 550–700 m, with a rich mosaic of mainly *Lyceum* woodland with grasses and woody herbs, especially *Pulcaria* and some *Tamarix*. An important area for sheep grazing.

One of the most important sites on Socotra for bird biodiversity with good breeding populations of:

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (probably <3pairs). Vulnerable: Socotra Buzzard (<3 pairs), Socotra Bunting (<20 pairs, >1% of its global population). Near-threatened: Socotra Cisticola (> 1000 individuals, >10% of its global population).

A2—Nine of the eleven range-restricted species confined to the Socotra EBA breed namely Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Cisticola, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow, Socotra Grosbeak, Socotra Bunting. These are all

Plate 1. Jebel Ma'alih, February 2007. © *RF Porter*

members of the Somali-Masai biome-restricted species assemblage (Stattersfield *et al* 1998, Fishpool & Evans 2001). [A further three species of the latter assemblage, SMbrsa, but which are not species of restricted-range to Socotra, also occur at the site: Forbes-Watson's Swift, Abyssinian White-eye, Somali Starling.]

Threats: fragmentation by road building could lead to development as the area is opened up to access (Miller *et al* 2007). Overgrazing is not likely to be a problem if current, sustainable, grazing management continues.

IBA 3. Shu'ub coast

Evans IBA 046 'Coast of Bindar Di-Sha'b' (inclusion in Evans 1994 due to site being good example of undisturbed coastal flora).

12° 35′ N, 53° 23′ E, *c*5 km². Surveyed 1999, qualifies under A1.

Site description. A coastal area comprising dwarf shrubland, dominated by *Zygophyllum*, *Limonium*, *Atriplex* and *Suaeda*, including *c*3 km² of *Croton* shrubland.

A1—Near-threatened: Socotra Cisticola (>250 individuals, *c*3% of the global population).

Threats: No immediate threats

IBA 4. Neet

New IBA.

12° 25′ N, 53° 28′ E, *c*4 km². Plate 2. Site identified since Evans (1994), surveyed in 2000 and 2007. Qualifies under A1.

Coastal dwarf shrubland dominated by *Zygophyllum*, *Limonium*, *Atriplex* and *Suaeda*.

A1—Near-threatened: Socotra Cisticola (>1000 individuals, >10% of the global population).

Threats: no known threats

Plate 2. The salt flats at Neet, February 2007. © *RF Porter*

IBA 5. Limestone plateau above Siko village

New IBA

12° 23′ N, 53° 38′ E, *c*20 km². Site identified since Evans (1994), surveyed in 2000, qualifies under A1, A2.

A limestone plateau, rising to 650 m asl and comprising *Croton*-covered rocky limestone slopes rising from a *Croton* plain and with hillsides dissected by deep, rocky, well-wooded ravines.

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (<5 pairs). Vulnerable: Socotra Buzzard (<2 pairs), Socotra Bunting (probably breeding).

A2—Eight of the eleven range-restricted species confined to the Socotra EBA breed: Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow, Socotra Grosbeak, Socotra Bunting (these SMbrsa). A further two SMbrsa spp, not range-restricted, also breed: Abyssinian White-eye, Somali Starling.

Threats: overgrazing may be a threat.

IBA 6. North coastal plain: airport to Di Selmeho/Ghubbah

Extended IBA, includes Evans IBA 038 'Airport Dunes'.

12° 36′ N, 53° 50′ E, *c*20 km². Surveyed 1999–2011, qualifies under A1.

Coastal dunes, flats and grazing land with patches of dwarf shrubland dominated by *Zygophyllum*, *Suaeda* and *Pulicaria* (Socotra Cisticola's breeding habitat).

A1—Endangered: important feeding area for Egyptian Vultures. Near-threatened: Socotra Cisticola (> 2500 individuals, >25% of global population). An important breeding area for Cream-coloured Coursers *Cursorius cursor* (>30 pairs) and Saunders's Terns *Sternula saundersi* (*c*200 pairs); also main nesting area for marine turtles on Socotra.

Threats: coastal development and overgrazing are most important.

IBA 7. Noged Plain

Evans IBA 053.

12° 21′ N, 53° 55′ E, 150 km². Plate 3. Surveyed 1999–2011, qualifies under A1, A2.

A relatively flat, barren semi-desert plain along the southern coast of Socotra, traversed by dry wadis and rising to 100 m. Large patches of dwarf shrubland dominated by *Indigofera*, *Limonium*, *Zygophyllum*, *Lycium* and *Suaeda* with scattered *Croton* trees. Several date palm groves.

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture feeding area; breeds and roosts on high cliffs at north edge of plain, probably <10 pairs. Vulnerable: Socotra Buzzard breeds on high cliffs at north edge of plain, probably <5 pairs. Near-threatened: Socotra Cisticola (>2100 individuals, >20% of global population).

A2—Eight of the eleven range-restricted species confined to the Socotra EBA breed: Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Cisticola, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow, Socotra Grosbeak (all SMbrsa). A further three SMbrsa spp, not restricted-range, also breed: Forbes-Watson's Swift *Apus berliozi* (in caves at north edge of plain), Abyssinian White-eye and Somali Starling. This is an important breeding area for Cream-coloured Coursers (probably > 200 pairs).

Threats: fragmentation through road building and associated ribbon development (Miller *et al* 2007). Overgrazing may be a threat.

Plate 3. Typical vegetation of the Noged plain, February 2004. © *RF Porter*

IBA 8. Wadi Ayhaft

Evans IBA 041.

12° 36′ N, 53° 58′ E, *c*15 km². Surveyed 1999–2011, qualifies under A1, A2.

Granite and limestone slopes, 50–800 m asl, in northern Socotra with abundant running water. One of the most densely wooded areas on the island, with sub-montane semi-deciduous thickets rising to montane thicket. The wadi is a source of piped water and a site frequented by tourists.

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (<5 pairs, also an important feeding and roosting area). Vulnerable: Socotra Buzzard (< 5 pairs).

A2—Seven of the eleven range-restricted species confined to the Socotra EBA breed: Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow, Socotra Grosbeak (these SMbrsa). A further two SMbrsa spp, not range-restricted, also breed: Abyssinian White-eye, Somali Starling.

Threats: timber collection and over-grazing.

IBA 9. North slopes of the Haggeher mountains

Revised IBA which includes Evans IBAs 037 'Ra's Hebaq', 039 'Muqadrihon pass', 042 'Rewgid and Regid plateaux'.

12° 37′ N, 54° 01′ E, *c*25 km². Plate 4. Surveyed 1999–2011, qualifies under A1, A2.

Limestone hills, cliffs and plateaux, rising to 700 m, in northern Socotra between Wadi Ayhaft and Wadi Di Negehen. One of the wettest areas on the island, catching monsoon

Plate 4. Northern slopes of the Haggeher, October 2008. © *RF Porter*

rain (especially June–September) and subject to very strong winds. Vegetation largely comprises sub-montane, semi-deciduous woodland and areas of open shrubland with woody herb communities. Also, areas of luxuriant thicket dominated by *Buxus hildebrandtii* with emergent *Dracaena cinnabari* and other endemic trees and shrubs. Well grazed by goats and harvested for timber.

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (10–20 pairs, also an important roosting site with over 350 regularly). Vulnerable: Socotra Buzzard (>5 pairs), Socotra Bunting.

A2—Eight of the eleven range-restricted species confined to Socotra EBA breed: Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow, Socotra Grosbeak, Socotra Bunting (all SMbrsa). A further two SMbrsa spp, not range-restricted, also breed: Abyssinian White-eye, Somali Starling.

Threats: apparently none.

IBA 10. Wadi Di Negehen

New IBA.

12° 37′ N, 54° 03′ E, *c*10 km². Plate 5. Surveyed 1999–2011, qualifies under critera A1, A2.

A deep, well-vegetated wadi and hillslopes, rising from 100–400 m asl. The wadi has running water year-round, fed from the Haggehers. Rocky hillsides comprise sub-montane, semi-deciduous woodland with some very large trees, notably *Sterculia africana*.

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (breeding and particularly roosting site). Vulnerable: Socotra Buzzard (<5 pairs).

Plate 5. Submontane shrubland, Wadi Di Negehan, February 2010. © *Lisa Banfield*

Plate 6. Montane mosaic, Skand, Haggeher, January 2008. © *Lisa Banfield*

A2—Seven of the eleven range-restricted species confined to Socotra EBA breed: Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow, Socotra Grosbeak (all SMbrsa). A further two SMbrsa spp, not range-restricted, also breed: Abyssinian White-eye, Somali Starling.

Threats: increasing tourism may pose a threat.

IBA 11. Haggeher

Evans IBA 047; now also combined with Jabal Jaaf (Evans IBA 043). Haggeher spelt 'Hajher' and Jaaf 'Jef' in Evans (1994).

12° 34′ N, 54° 03′ E, *c*80 km². Plate 6. One of the richest areas for biodiversity on Socotra and surveyed 1999–2011. Qualifies under criteria A1, A2.

The dramatic Haggeher mountains dominate the Socotran landscape. Barren-looking granite slopes and pinnacles, rising 800–1500 m asl, are vegetated with montane thicket, open grassland plateaux and light scrub. Important pastoral region for cattle, goats and camels.

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (>20 pairs, also important roosting site). Vulnerable: Socotra Buzzard (>5 pairs), Socotra Bunting.

A2—Eight of the eleven range-restricted species confined to Socotra EBA breed: Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow, Socotra Grosbeak, Socotra Bunting (all SMbrsa). A further two SMbrsa spp, not range-restricted, also breed: Abyssinian White-eye, Somali Starling.

Threats: no apparent threats.

IBA 12. Diksam

Evans IBA 050.

12° 30′ N, 53° 58′ E, *c*40 km². Plate 7. Surveyed 1999–2011, qualifies under A1, A2.

Granite and limestone slopes at 550–700 m asl, with sub-montane, semi-deciduous thickets, distinguished by *Punica protopunica* shrubland. Much cattle and goat-grazing.

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (>5 pairs, also important roosting site). Vulnerable: Socotra Buzzard (<5 pairs), Socotra Bunting.

A2—Eight of the eleven range-restricted species confined to Socotra EBA breed: Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow, Socotra Grosbeak, Socotra Bunting (all SMbrsa). A further two SMbrsa spp, not range-restricted, also breed: Abyssinian White-eye, Somali Starling.

Threats: fragmentation caused by new roads and small-scale built development may pose a threat.

IBA 13. Firmihin near Jabal Keseslah

Evans IBA 052.

12° 33′ N, 54° 03′ E, *c*10 km². Plate 8. Surveyed 1999–2011, qualifies under A1, A2.

An upland area, rising to 800 m asl, close to Diksam, with a deep ravine and extensive, dense *Dracaena* woodland and sub-montane, semi-deciduous thicket. Well grazed.

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (<5 pairs, important roosting area). Vulnerable: Socotra Buzzard (probably >10 pairs, one of the highest breeding concentrations).

Plate 7. Diksam, October 2008. © *RF Porter*

Plate 8. *Dracaena* woodland at Firmihan, October 2007. © *RF Porter*

A2—Seven of the eleven range-restricted species confined to Socotra EBA breed: Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow, Socotra Grosbeak (all SMbrsa). A further two SMbrsa spp, not range-restricted, also breed: Abyssinian White-eye, Somali Starling.

Threats: road development is a potential threat causing habitat fragmentation.

IBA 14. Hadiboh estuaries of Hadiboh, Sheck and Sirhan

New IBA.

12° 39′ N, 54° 02′ E, *c*5 km². Plate 9. Surveyed 1999–2011, qualifies under A1, A2.

Three palm-fringed, coastal estuaries with permanent water on the edge of the capital, Hadiboh. An important educational site for showing people birds, as close views can be obtained.

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (display, feeding and watering site).

A2—Two of the eleven range-restricted species confined to Socotra EBA breed: Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Sparrow (both SMbrsa). A further two SMbrsa spp, not range-restricted, also breed: Abyssinian White-eye, Somali Starling.

This is a key wetland complex for wintering waterfowl, waders, gulls and terns. Ferruginous Ducks *Aythya nyroca* (near-threatened) occur regularly but in small numbers.

Threats: road and ribbon development, pollution from waste emptied into the feeder wadis and human disturbance are considered to be the main threats.

Plate 9. Sirhan lagoon, a Hadiboh estuary, February 2004. © *RF Porter*

IBA 15. Hamadero Plateau and Scarp

Evans IBA 045.

12° 36′ N, 54° 17′ E, *c*25 km². Surveyed 2004, qualifies under A1, A2.

Limestone slopes and rolling plateau rising to 500 m asl with sub-montane, semi-deciduous thicket and mosaic of dwarf *Croton* and *Jatropha*. Important area for livestock grazing.

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (>5 pairs, also a roosting site). Vulnerable: Socotra Buzzard (>5 pairs).

A2—Seven of the eleven range-restricted species confined to Socotra EBA breed: Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow, Socotra Grosbeak (all SMbrsa). A further two SMbrsa spp, not range-restricted, also breed: Abyssinian White-eye, Somali Starling.

Threats: possibly overgrazing.

IBA 16. Wadi Merkoh

New IBA.

12° 31′ N, 54° 08′ E, *c*20 km². Surveyed 1999, 2004, 2007, qualifies under A1, A2.

A palm-fringed wadi with permanent water, running through stony, rocky hills, rising from 200–500 m asl, with semi-evergreen trees and scattered *Jatropha, Ziziphus, Tamarix* and *Croton*, dense in places.

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (1–2 pairs, roosting site). Vulnerable: Socotra Buzzard (1–2 pairs).

A2—Seven of the eleven range-restricted species confined to Socotra EBA breed: Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow, Socotra Grosbeak (all SMbrsa). A further two SMbrsa spp, not range-restricted, also breed: Abyssinian White-eye, Somali Starling.

Threats: road construction and ribbon-development are potential threats, resulting in habitat fragmentation (Miller *et al* 2007).

IBA 17. Falang–Momi coast and cliffs

Revised IBA which includes part of Evans IBA 051 'Ra's Momi and Fikhah'.

12° 28′ N, 54° 24′ E, *c*50 km². Plate 10. Surveyed 2011, qualifies under A1, A2, A4ii.

Extensive high cliffs, up to 600 m asl, flanking coastal flats at extreme southeast of Socotra. Sparsely vegetated.

A1—Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (>5 pairs, roosting site). Vulnerable: Socotra Buzzard (<5 pairs). Socotra Cormorant (roosting and feeding, up to 12 000).

A2—Five of the eleven range-restricted species confined to Socotra EBA breed: Socotra Buzzard, Socotra Warbler, Socotra Cisticola, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow (all SMbrsa). A further SMbrsa sp, not range-restricted, also breeds: Somali Starling.

A4ii—Seabirds: Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* (breeds on cliffs, >300 recorded displaying, *c*1.5–6% of global population), Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* (roosts on cliffs), Jouanin's Petrel (feeds offshore).

Threats: The building of the island's ring road will open the area to built development (Miller *et al* 2007).

Plate 10. The cliffs at Falang, November 2007. © *RF Porter*

Plate 11. Abd Al Kuri, February 1992. © *Tony Miller*

IBA 18. Abd al-Kuri

Evans IBA 055.

12° 11′ N, 52° 13′ E, 130 km^2. Plate 11. Surveyed 1999–2007, qualifies under criteria A1, A2, A4ii.

Large, well-grazed, populated island, *c*30 km long × up to 5 km wide and rising to 570 m asl. Sparse vegetation dominated by open shrubland and dwarf-herb communities, containing *Euphorbia*.

A1—Vulnerable: Abd al-Kuri Sparrow (<1000 individuals).

A2—Range-restricted: Abd al-Kuri Sparrow (endemic to Abd al-Kuri).

A4ii—Breeding seabirds: Persian Shearwater *Puffinus persicus*, Red-billed Tropicbird (>50 pairs, 0.5–2% of global population), Saunders's Tern and possibly Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*, but there have been no dedicated surveys.

Threats: rats and possibly cats might pose a threat to nesting seabirds, but this has not been assessed. Oil spillage would be a threat to nesting seabirds.

IBA 19. Sabuniya

Part of Evans IBA 054.

12° 39′ N, 53° 09′ E, *c*100 ha. Plate 12. Surveyed 1999–2009, qualifies under A1.

Small sea-stack to west of Socotra island comprising three peaks, *c*80 m high. Whitened by guano and bare of vegetation.

A1—Vulnerable: Socotra Cormorant (*c*250 pairs). Breeding seabirds: Socotra Cormorant (*c*250 pairs), Masked Booby (*c*400 pairs), Brown Booby (*c*10 pairs), Red-billed Tropicbird (*c*25 pairs), Brown Noddy (250–300 pairs), Bridled Tern (300–500 pairs). These breeding populations do not qualify the site for inclusion under 4ii.

Threats: there would appear to be no threats. Rats are not apparently present.

IBA 20. Kal Farun

Part of Evans IBA 054.

12° 27′ N, 52° 07′ E, <30 ha. Surveyed 2002–2005, qualifies under A1, A4ii.

Two sea-stacks, *c*80 m high, lying 30 km north of Abd al-Kuri. Whitened by guano and bare of vegetation.

Plate 12. Sabuniya, October 2009. © *Ulf Stahle*

A1—Vulnerable: Socotra Cormorant (*c*2500 pairs).

A4ii—Breeding seabirds: Red-billed Tropicbird (*c*75 pairs, 0.75–3% of global population), Masked Booby (*c*900 pairs), Brown Booby (250–300 pairs), Socotra Cormorant (*c*2500 pairs, >2% of global population), Brown Noddy (*c*200 pairs), Bridled Tern (*c*250 pairs).

Threats: apparently none. Seemingly, rats not present.

IBA 21. Darsa

Part of Evans IBA 056 'Al-Ikhwan' ('the Brothers'), comprising islands of Darsa and Samha.

12° 07′ N, 53° 18′ E, 16 km^2. Surveyed 2004 and 2005, qualifies under A4ii.

A rather inaccessible flat-topped, sheer-sided island southwest of Socotra, rising to 385 m asl with low shrubland on coastal plain and lower slopes.

A4ii—Seabirds: Red-billed Tropicbird (400–500 pairs, 4–20% of global population), Brown Booby (*c*1500 pairs, >1% of global population), Brown Noddy (1000–1500 pairs), Sooty Gull (*c*1000 pairs), Bridled Tern (200–300 pairs).

Threats: rats.

Provisional IBA pending further survey: Samha

Part of Evans IBA 056 'Al-Ikhwan' ('the Brothers'), comprising islands of Darsa and Samha.

12° 10′ N, 53° 02′ E, 40 km^2. Plate 13. Surveyed 2004, 2005.

A sheer-sided island southwest of Socotra, rising to 780 m asl with low, open shrubland.

Endangered: Egyptian Vulture probably breeds.

Range-restricted: Socotra Sparrow

SMbrsa: Somali Starling and Socotra Sparrow.

Plate 13. Samha, April 2007. © *Lisa Banfield*

Seabirds: Persian Shearwater, Red-billed Tropicbird (*c*5 pairs), Brown Booby (100–150 pairs).

Threats: rats. Oil spillage would be a threat to nesting seabirds.

No longer considered to qualify as IBAs

Evans IBAs 035 'Qalansiya Lagoon' (Yemen's specimen Ramsar site), 040 'Shidahah', 044 'Rookib hills', 048 'Firjih/Central Socotra', 049 'Di-Ishal' foothills.

DISCUSSION

Initially, a radical look at bird biodiversity and distribution suggested that the entire archipelago be designated a single IBA as many of the key species (globally threatened, range-restricted, biome-restricted and endemics) are widespread and found in a range of habitat types (the whole archipelago was designated an EBA, BirdLife International 2016). Figures 3–11 show distribution maps of the endemics, which illustrates this point. However, this approach was rejected as it would not be practical for the important actions that follow site designation: advocacy to ensure site protection, land-management and policing of illegal practices. More seabird data needs collecting for the islands and sea stacks, so the site accounts for these birds should be regarded as somewhat provisional. It is probable that the breeding populations of some seabirds will exceed the 1% regional population threshold.

Determining the threats and potential threats to many sites proved difficult and should include damage by tropical cyclones. The intensity of hurricanes Chapala and Megh in November 2015 impacted the Socotran landscape notably through the destruction of mature trees (Plate 14, Yemen EPA 2015). The destruction of large mature trees including of *Dracaena cinnabari* (already vulnerable due to poor regeneration), *Boswellia* spp, *Sterculia africana, Jatropha unicosta, Ziziphus spina-cristi* and *Croton socrotanus* in parts of Socotra

Plate 14. Up-rooted *Dracaena cinnabari*—typical of the many trees that were affected by the hurricanes of November 2015. © *Abduljameel Abdullah*

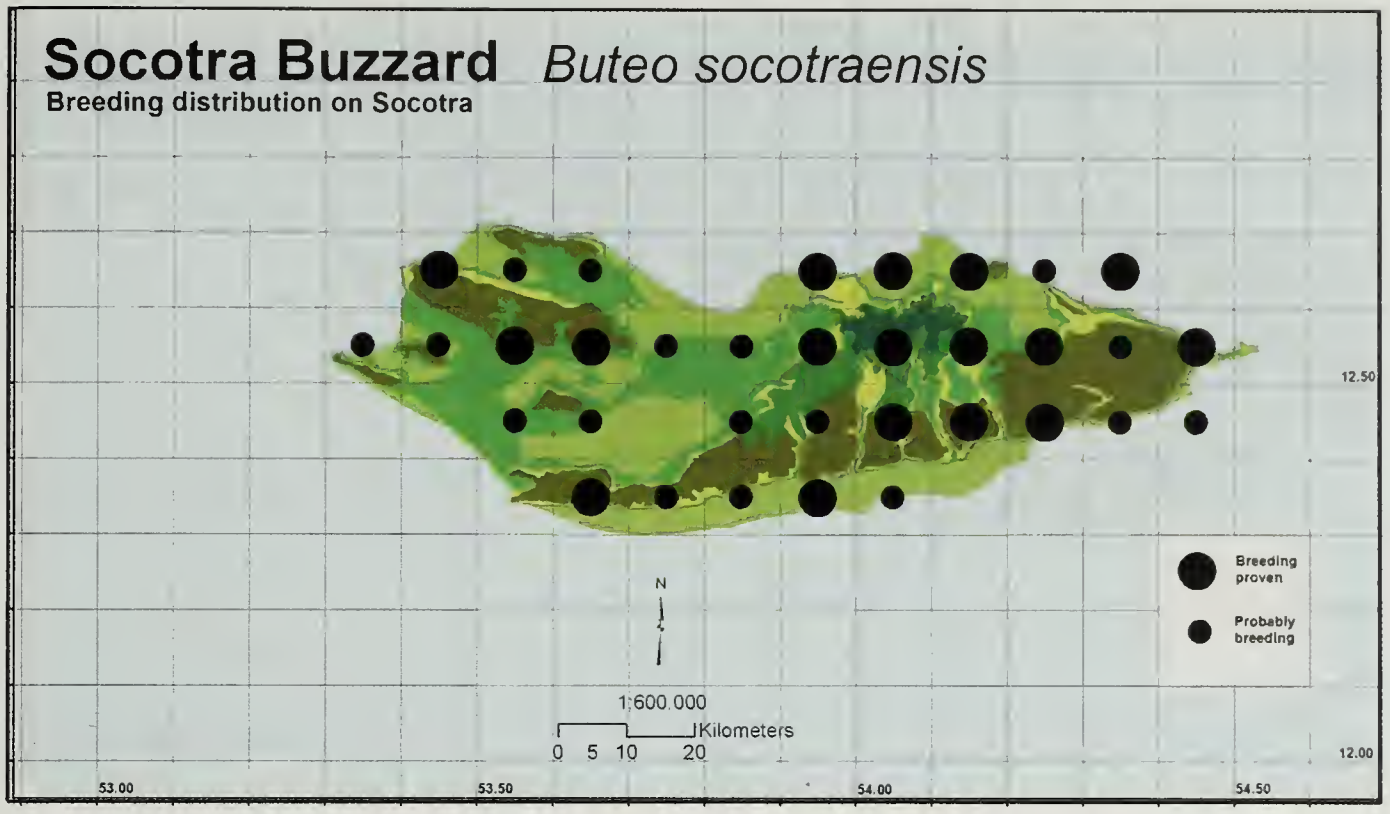


Figure 3. Socotra Buzzard: Socotran breeding distribution.

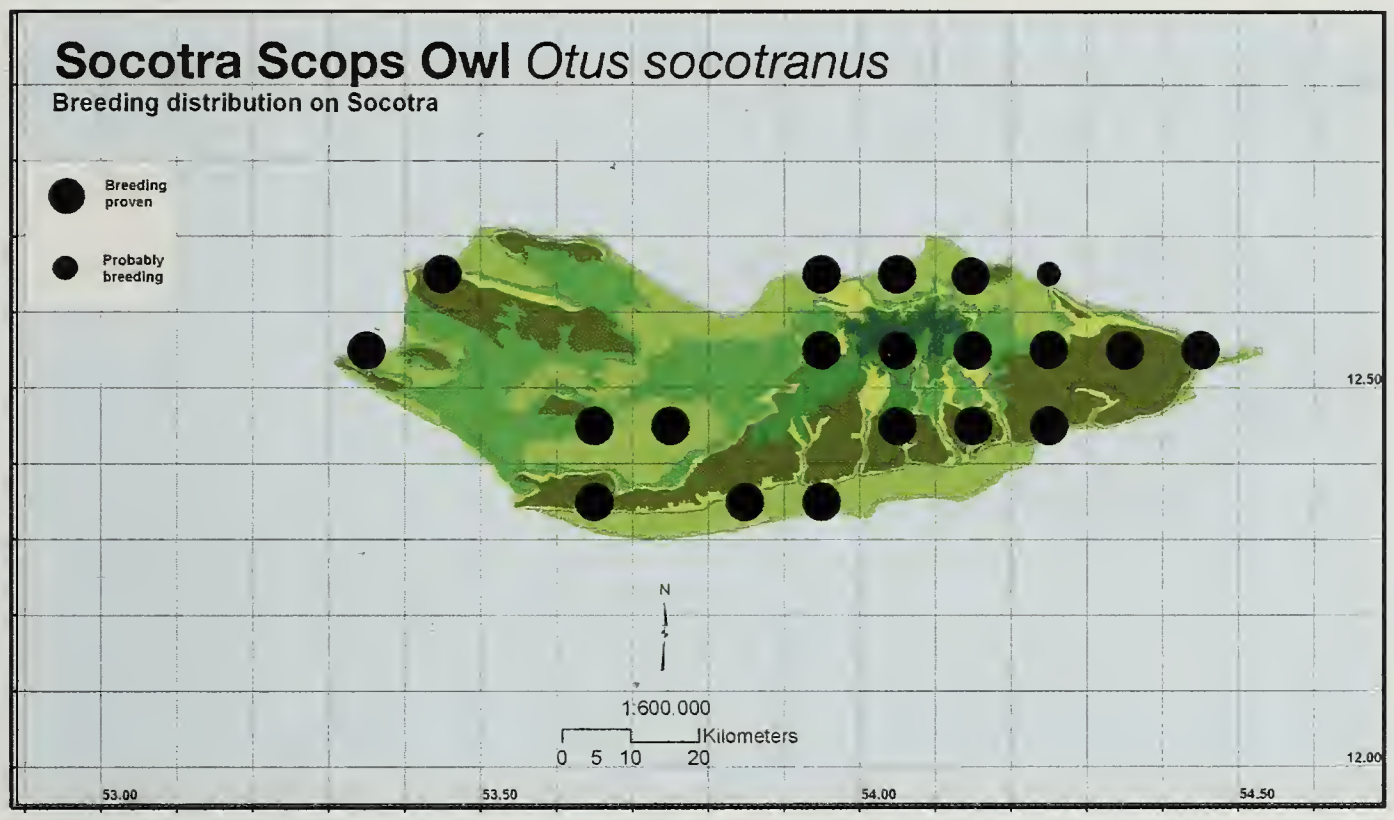


Figure 4. Socotra Scops Owl: Socotran breeding distribution.

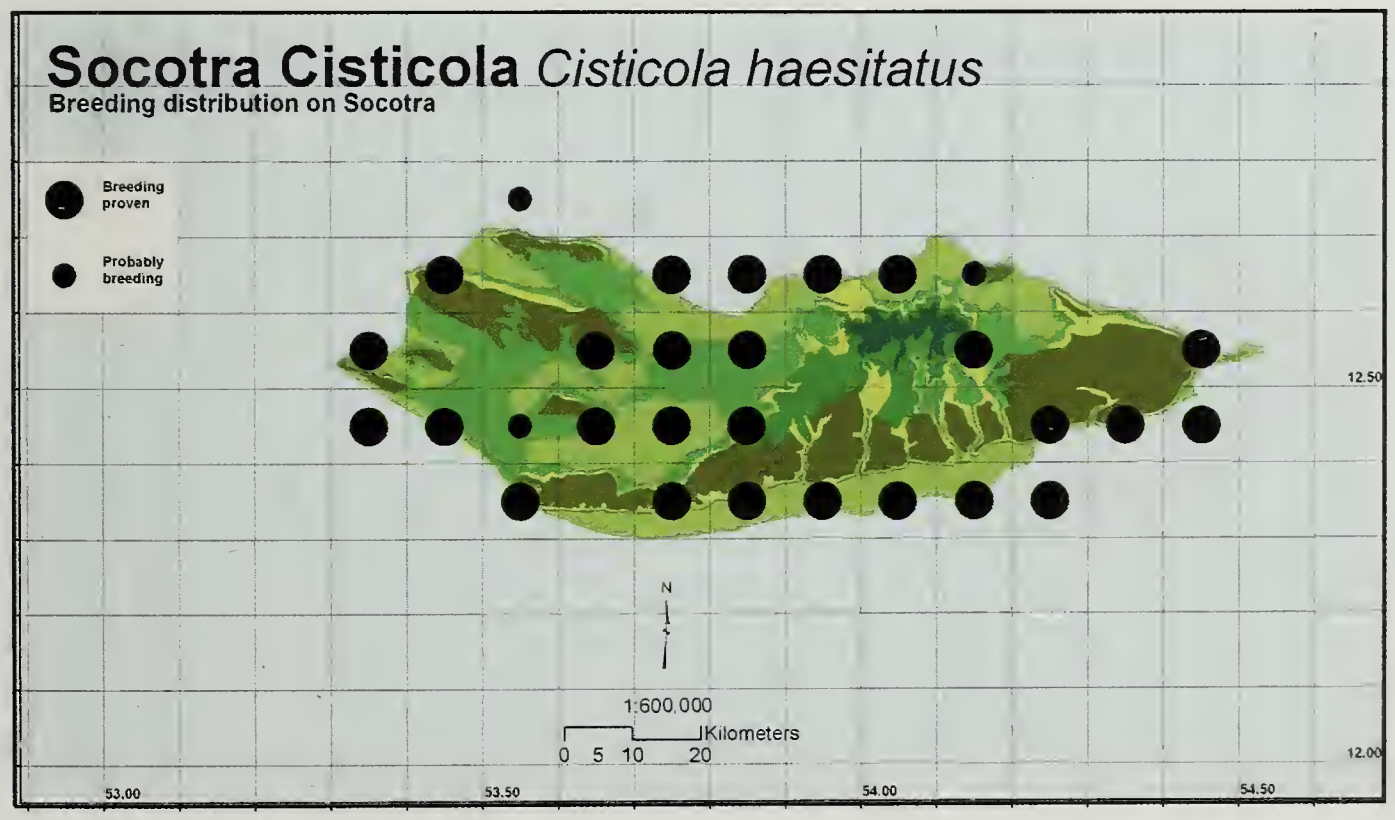


Figure 5. Socotra Cisticola: Socotran breeding distribution.

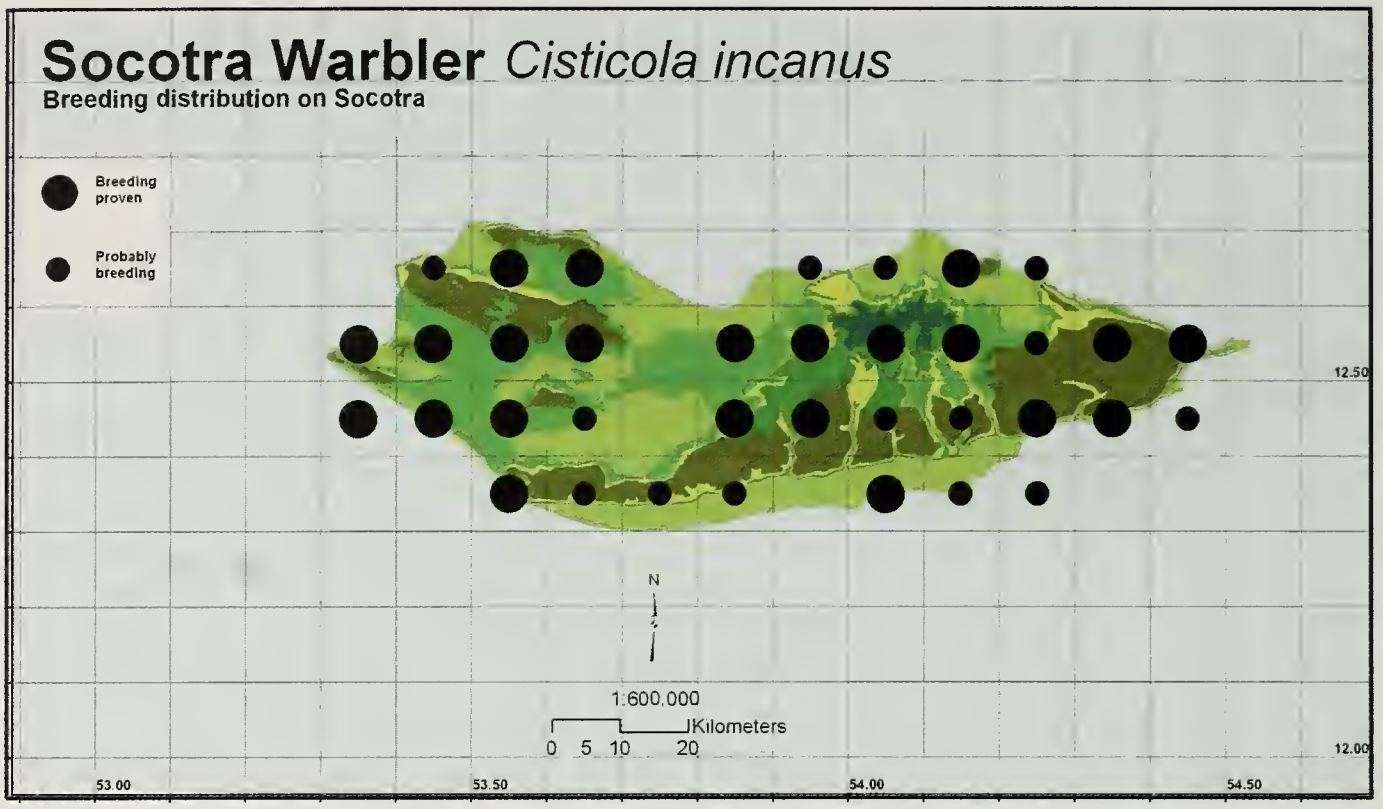


Figure 6.
Socotra Warbler: Socotran breeding distribution.

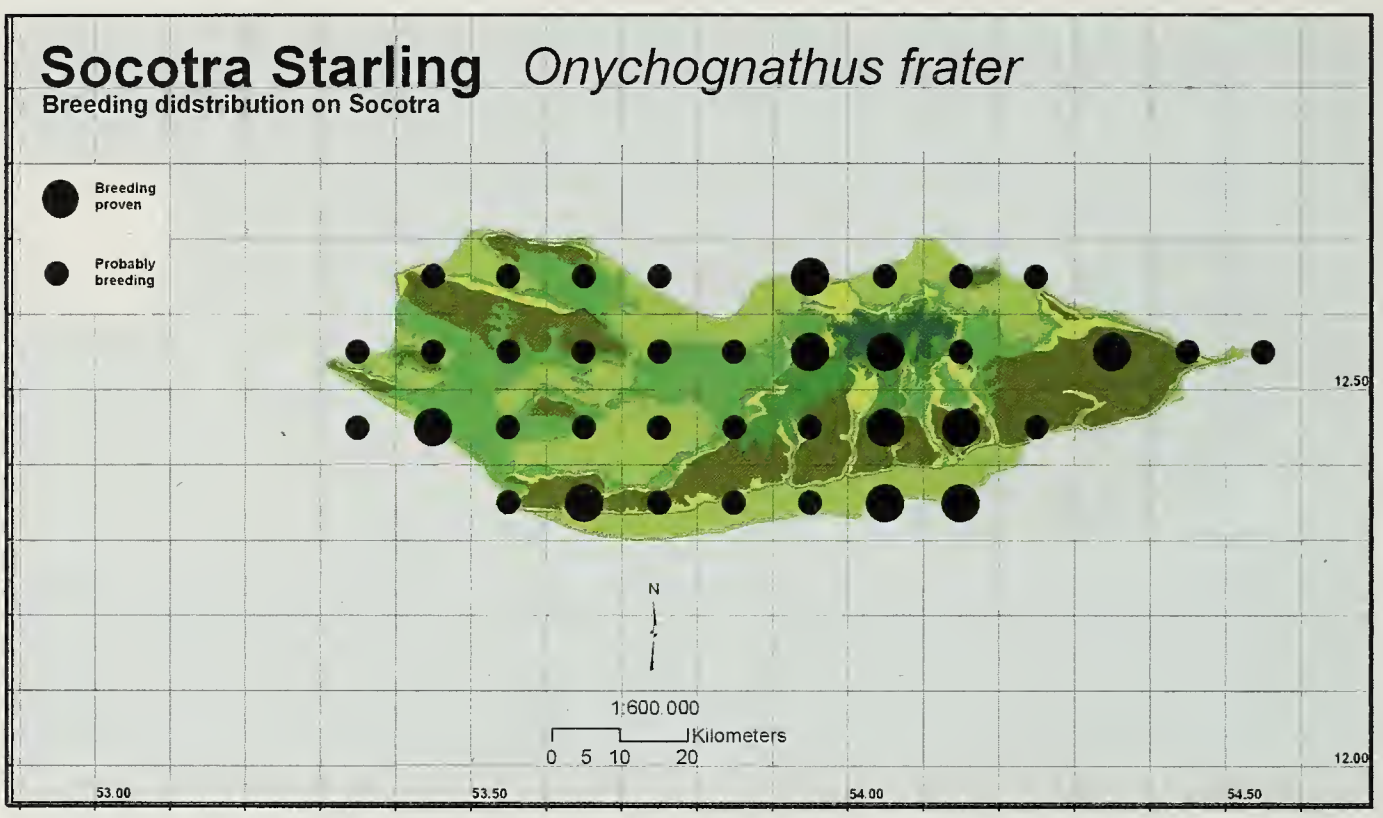


Figure 7.
Socotra Starling: Socotran breeding distribution.

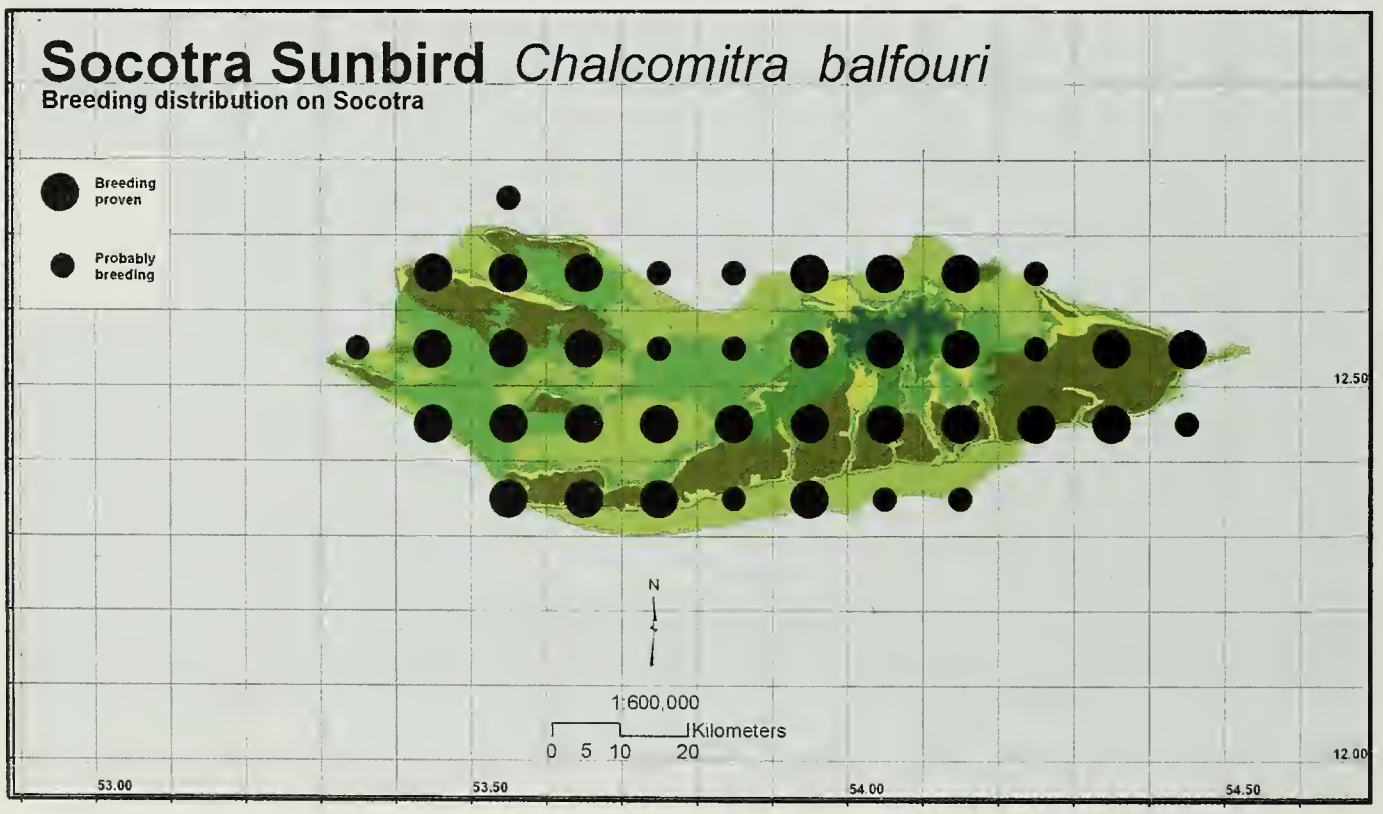


Figure 8.
Socotra Sunbird: Socotran breeding distribution.

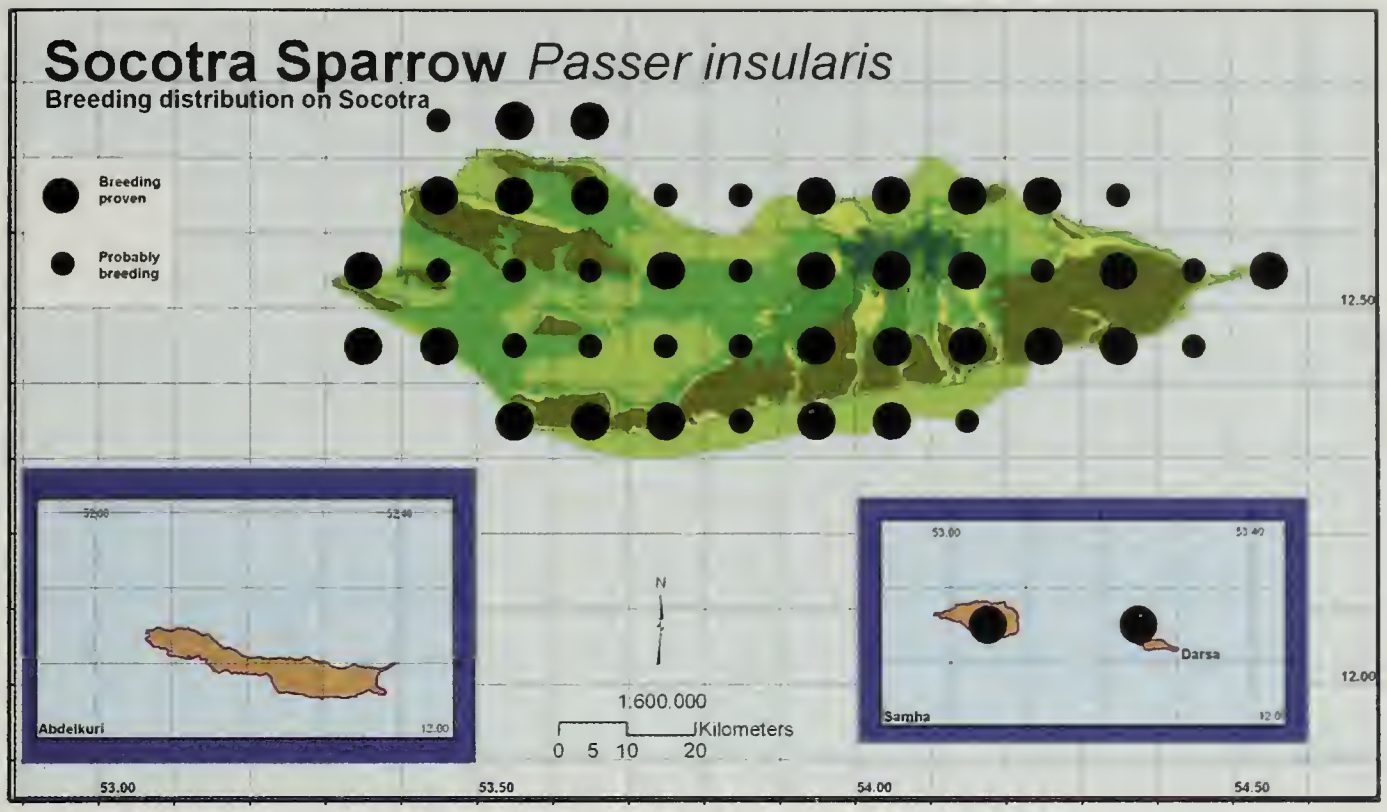


Figure 9.
Socotra Sparrow: Socotran breeding distribution.

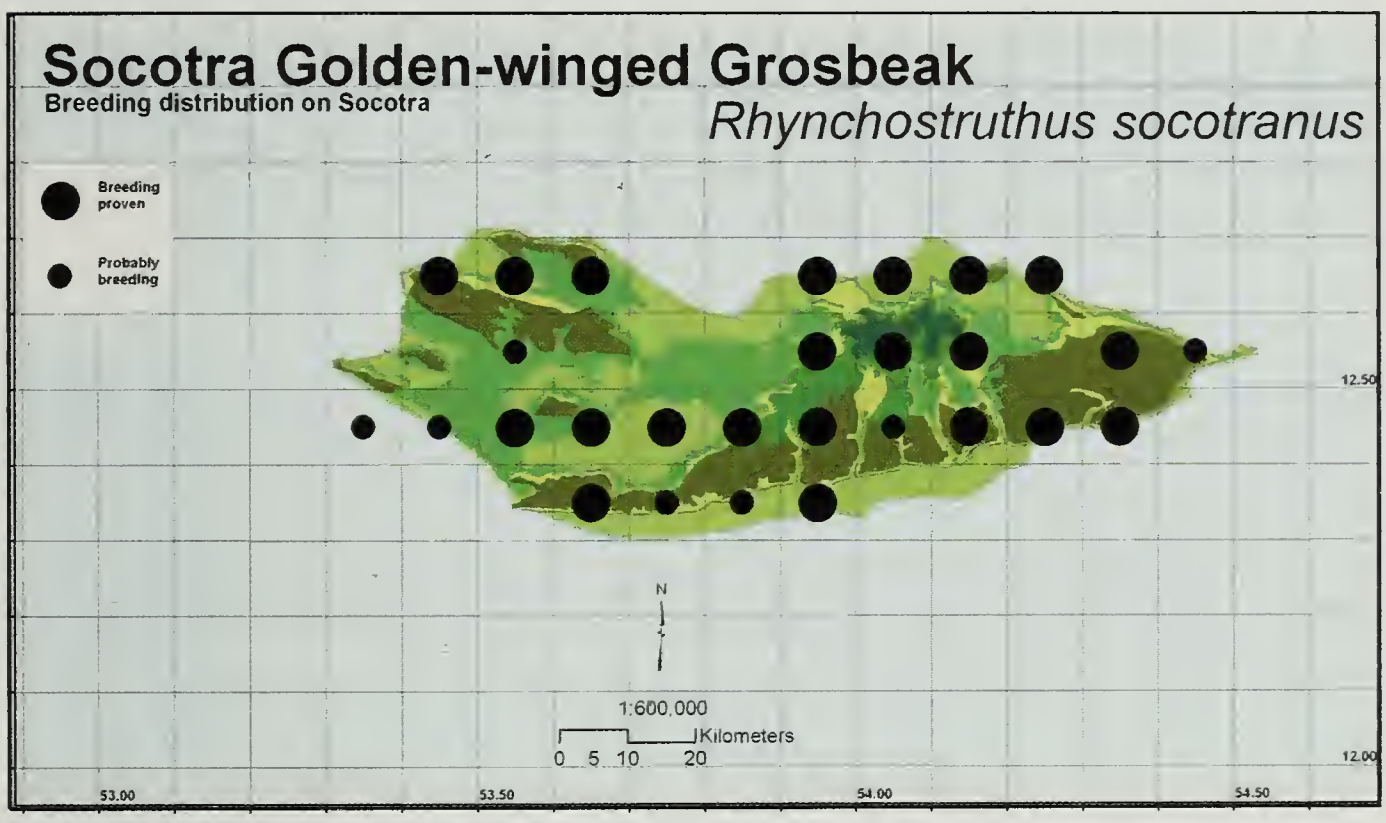


Figure 10.
Socotra Golden-winged Grosbeak: Socotran breeding distribution.

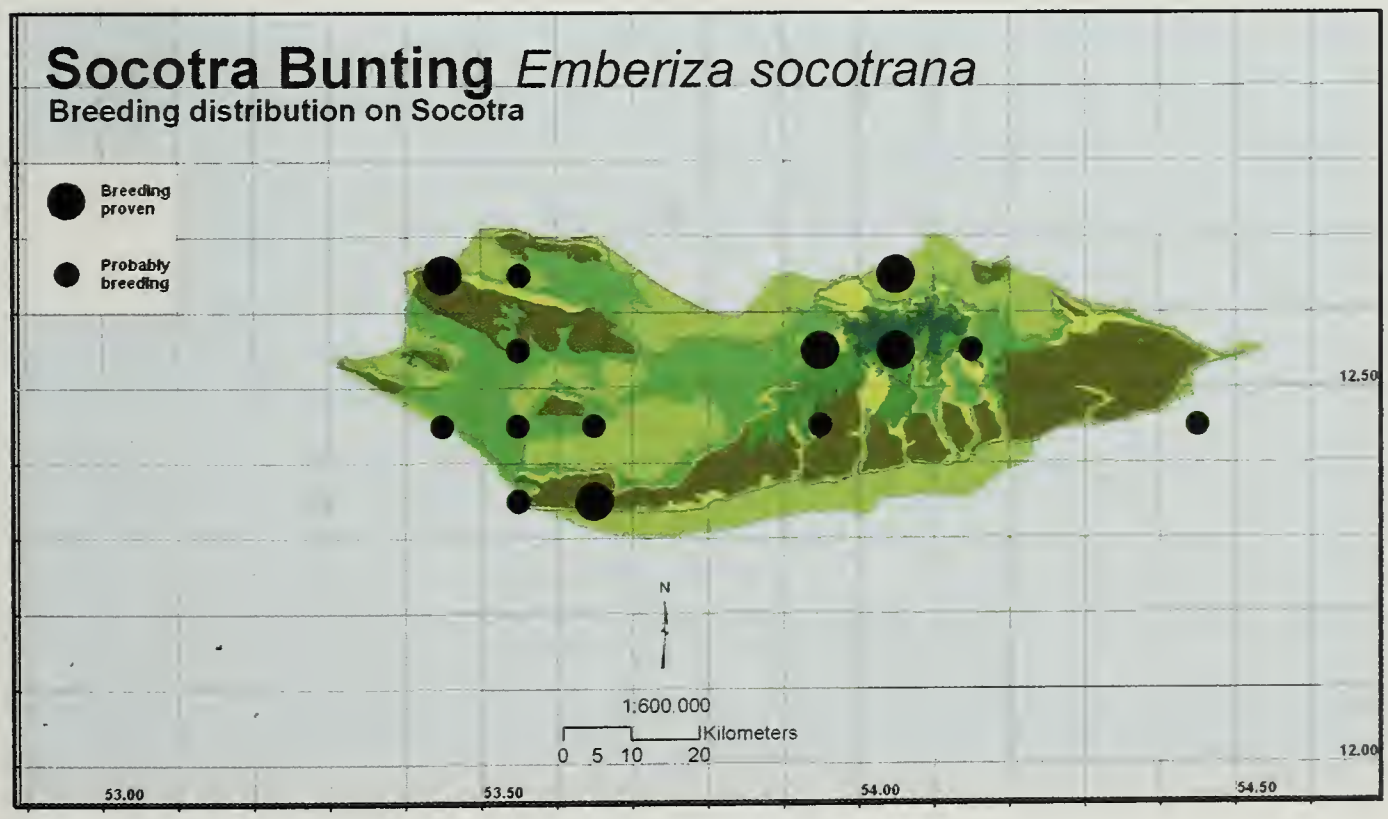


Figure 11.
Socotra Bunting: Socotran breeding distribution.

might impact, at least in the short-term, the populations of five of the eleven endemic species (Socotra Scops Owl, Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow and Socotra Grosbeak), which use such trees for nesting and/or feeding. The destruction of palm groves would also affect Socotra Scops Owls as these trees are important for nesting and roosting. Birds are mobile organisms, however, and presumably could move to less or undamaged sites. The IBAs most adversely affected by the hurricanes due to mature tree destruction appear to be Jabal Ma'alah (IBA 2), Noged Plain (IBA 7), Haggeher (IBA 11), Diksam (IBA 12), Firmihin (IBA 13) and Hamadero Plateau (IBA 15) (Abduljameel Abdullah and Nadim Taleb *in litt*). Furthermore the conflict in mainland Yemen has caused, at least temporarily, an increase in the archipelago's isolation. This has, for example, resulted in a decrease in fuel supplies, thus increasing wood collection (Abduljameel Abdullah *in litt*). This could further impact on bird populations. Clearly, comprehensive site impact assessments are needed to properly assess the impacts of the hurricanes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Abduljameel Abdullah, Nadim Taleb and Omar Al-Saghier for their help in the assessments of site threats following the hurricanes of November 2015. Lincoln Fishpool and Kay Van Damme gave advice and encouragement that helped in the paper's preparation. Simon Aspinall, Mike Evans, David Flumm, Rod Martins and Nadim Taleb assisted with the breeding bird surveys that enabled this IBA review. Figures 1 & 2 were kindly drawn by Kay Van Damme, using the Friends of Socotra/Socotra Conservation & Development Programme map and with the permission of FOS. The paper has been prepared to support the Integrated Programme for Conservation and Development of the Socotra archipelago currently being undertaken by GEF and UNDP. The Socotra bird surveys were supported privately and by BirdLife International, Yemen's Environment Protection Authority, the UK Darwin Initiative and the Wetland Trust.

LITERATURE CITED

Al-Saghier, O, A Alsuhaibany & P Symens. 2000. The status of breeding seabirds. *In*: Hariri, KI & F Krupp (eds). *Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity of Socotra Archipelago. Marine Habitat, Biodiversity and Fisheries Surveys and Management. Report of Phase II.* Senckenberg Research Institute, Frankfurt am Main/ Hariri & Associates, Sana'a, pp97–104.

BirdLife International. 2014. *Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas: A global network for conserving nature and benefiting people.* BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK. [www.birdlife.org/datazone/sowb/sowbpubs#IBA]

BirdLife International. 2016. *Country profile: Yemen.* www.birdlife.org/datazone/country/yemen. [Checked 8 May 2016]

Cheung, C & L DeVantier. 2006. *Socotra- A Natural History of the Islands and their People.* Odyssey, Hong Kong.

Evans, MI. 1994. *Important Bird Areas in the Middle East.* BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK.

Fishpool, LDC & MI Evans (eds). 2001. *Important Bird Areas in Africa and associated islands.* BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK.

Holmstrom, N & U Stahle. 2010. *Yemen & Socotra; 18 October to 2 November 2009.* http://Socotra2009.blogspot.com.

Jennings, MC. 2010. Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia. *Fauna of Arabia* 25.

Mallon, D, A Symes, J Taylor, R Porter, C Simms & K Budd. 2015. *The conservation status and distribution of the breeding birds of the Arabian Peninsula.* IUCN, Cambridge, UK/Gland, Switzerland & Environment and Protected Areas Authority, Sharjah, UAE.

Miller, AG & M Morris. 2004. *Ethnoflora of the Socotra Archipelago.* Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.

Miller, A, R Porter, L DeVantier, C Cheung & U Zajonz. 2007. *Roads on Socotra: Environmental Impacts and Recommendations.* BirdLife International, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh & Senckenberg University, UK & Germany.

Porter, RF & RP Martins. 1996. Southern Yemen and Socotra: the report of the OSME survey in spring 1993. *Sandgrouse* 17.

Porter, RF & AS Suleiman. 2011. *Checklist of the Birds of the Socotra Archipelago.* www.osme.org.

Porter, RF & AS Suleiman. 2013. The populations and distribution of the breeding birds of the Socotra archipelago, Yemen: 1. Sandgrouse to Buntings. *Sandgrouse* 35(1): 43–81.

Porter, RF & AS Suleiman. 2014. The populations and distribution of the breeding birds of the Socotra archipelago, Yemen: 2. Shearwaters to Terns. *Sandgrouse* 36(1): 8–33.

Stattersfield, AJ, MJ Crosby, AJ Long & DC Wege. 1998. *Endemic Bird Areas of the World. Priorities for biodiversity conservation.* BirdLife Conservation Series 7. BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK.

Suleiman, AS, A Bolen, AY Al Hassan & A Shamsan. 2005. *Expedition to outer islands, 22–29 March 2005.* Internal report, Yemen's Environment Protection Authority.

Suleiman, AS, B Rose, PG Ryan. 2007. *Visit to outer islands, 27 March–2 April 2007.* Internal Report, Yemen's Environment Protection Authority.

Taleb, NMA. 2002. The discovery of a breeding colony of Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax* on Socotra, Yemen. *Sandgrouse* 24: 105–108.

Yemen Environment Protection Authority. 2015. *Environmental damage of Chapala hurricane in Socotra archipelago, Yemen: preliminary assessment.* Internal document, Yemen EPA.

RF Porter, c/o BirdLife International, The David Attenborough Bldg, Pembroke St, Cambridge, CB2 3QZ, UK. RFPorter@talktalk.net

Ahmed Saeed Suleiman, Former Director General, Environment Protection Authority, Socotra. Hadiboh, Socotra, Republic of Yemen. qamhem@yahoo.com

Six interesting bird records including two new species, Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* and White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, for Lebanon

GHASSAN RAMADAN-JARADI & FOUAD ITANI

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*

This species is a rare migrant in Iraq and Syria and vagrant to Cyprus, Israel, Kuwait, Oman and UAE (Porter & Aspinall 2010). In Lebanon it is a scarce passage migrant with the last seen in 1997 (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 2001). On 10 June 2015, whilst looking at native but captive bird species in pet shops of Ouzai near Beirut, GRJ saw a semi-captive pelican (Plate 1) kept and fed by people in a fishery. The fishery owner had found it in a morbid condition in the Damour river estuary, *c*20 km to the south of Beirut. The pelican had been injured by hunters late April 2015. It was a Dalmatian Pelican due to lead-grey feet (ruling out Great White Pelican *P. onocrotalus*) and because of its large size and orange beak nail, absence of plume-like feathers and slightly pale eyes (ruling out Pink-backed Pelican *P. rufescens*). It was most probably an immature. This record is the first for over 18 years.

Plate 1. A captive Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, Lebanon (see text). © *Ghassan Ramadan-Jaradi*

Plate 2. Male Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*, shot by hunter 18 October 2015, Labweh, east Beqaa valley, Lebanon.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

The Namaqua Dove extends from Africa into the Arabian peninsula and southern Israel (Shirihai *et al* 1999). It may breed in Jordan (Shirihai *et al* 1999) and Syria (Porter & Aspinall 2010). It is a vagrant to Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Socotra, Turkey and Lebanon (Porter & Aspinall 2010). First record in Lebanon was two individuals in 1999 or 2000 at Tyre, recorded by FI. The second was 7 July 2003 Beirut and the third 6 February 2005 at Baabda (both individuals showed worn feathers indicating possible escapes) (Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008). The 4th record was 16 May 2006 eastern Beqaa valley (Haraldsson 2008, Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008). In 2015, a male, with black mask and yellow bill (Plate 2) was shot by a hunter 18 October at Labweh in the eastern Beqaa valley, and a female was shot by Wassim Alam, another hunter, 24 October at Okaybeh, Kesrouwan (Plate 3). On the same day, 24 October 2015, a female was shot by the hunter Wissam Atallah at Qaa, eastern Beqaa valley, 20 km northeast of Labweh (photos posted on Yahoo group 'Birdtalk Lebanon'). These records, particularly the three October records in 2015, suggest Namaqua Dove is expanding northwards in Lebanon.

Plate 3. Female Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*, shot by hunter 24 October 2015, Okaybeh, Kesrouwan, Lebanon.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Short-eared Owl is a rare breeder in the Middle East, in Turkey. It has bred Israel (Porter & Aspinall 2010), is a rare migrant in Jordan and formerly in winter (Andrews *et al* 1999) and is probably a rare winter visitor in Syria (Murdoch & Betton 2008). In Lebanon, Short-eared Owl is a very rare winter visitor and probably very rare passage migrant (Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2008). However, one individual was photographed by Ramzi Breik (Plate 4) 10 November 2014 at Shouf biosphere reserve on the eastern slopes of the Lebanon range between Barouk and Ain Zhalta villages. This is the first passage record for Lebanon for over 40 years. The species was recorded four times as a winter visitor, last record 1998 (Balmer & Betton 2002).

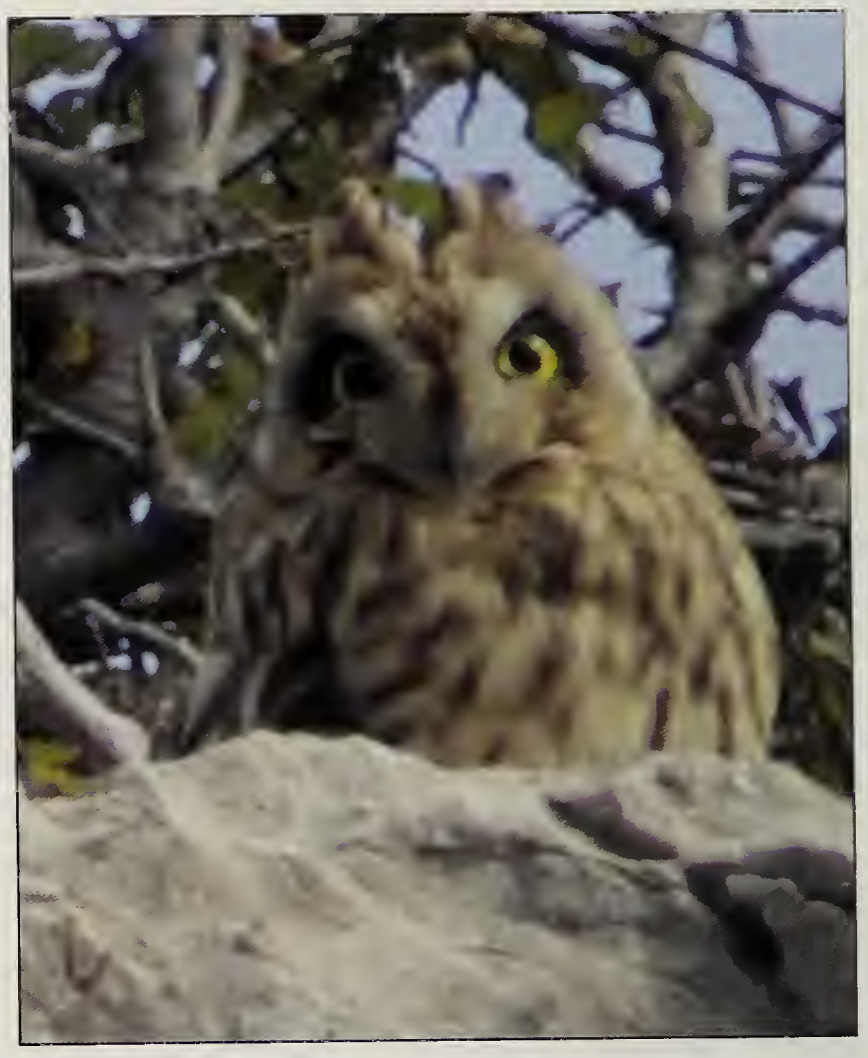


Plate 4. Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* 10 November 2014, Shouf biosphere reserve, Lebanon. © *Ramzi Breik*

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

In the Middle East, this species is recorded as a vagrant in Cyprus, Syria and Lebanon (Porter & Aspinall 2010). In Lebanon, Firecrest was first recorded 13 October and 12 November 1958 in cedars near Bsharri (Flash 1959). On 13 November 2015, a Firecrest (Plate 5) was shot at high altitude near Zayneye' lake above Yammouneh by a hunter, Ali Mohamad. This is the second record for the species in Lebanon.

Plate 5. A Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*, shot by hunter at high altitude near Zayneye' lake above Yammouneh, Lebanon, 13 November 2015.

White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*

Largely resident and dispersive in parts of the Sahara and Arabian peninsula and has occurred as a vagrant to Cyprus, Greece, Malta (IUCN 2015) and Croatia (1–4 Aug 2001, Muzinic 2002). May breed southeast Syria and Yemen, rare Kuwait; vagrant Syria, Bahrain, Iran, Oman, Qatar, Turkey, UAE (Porter & Aspinall 2010) and Iraq (Salim 2010, Porter & Aspinall 2010). On 14 September 2015, Maher Rouhana photographed a wheatear at Roumieh village (33° 52′ 24.22″ N, 35° 36′ 23.22″ E) that was glossy black with black underparts down to legs, white on crown, tail, rump and under-tail (Plate 6). The bird showed a black centre to its white tail. The tail was without a distal black bar. We asked MR to provide us with other photos. He went again to the location. A man living there who saw him days back taking photos of the bird told him that he had already shot the bird. The man went home and retrieved the bird from a refrigerator. Inspection of the unlucky bird revealed a few black flecks at the tip of the tail (Plate 7).

Plate 6. A White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* 14 September 2015, Roumieh village, Lebanon. © *Maher Rouhana*

Plate 7. The White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* of Plate 6, from a hunter's refrigerator. © *Maher Rouhana*

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

In the Middle East this is a breeding summer visitor in central and northeast Turkey and northern Iran. It is a common migrant in eastern Iran (Shirihai 1996). The Common Rosefinch is a vagrant to Cyprus, Syria, Jordan (Porter & Aspinall 2010) and Iraq (Salim *et al* 2012). Shirihai *et al* (1999) indicated that it is a very rare passage and winter visitor as well as summer non-breeding visitor in Israel with a mention of ringed birds in autumn. Andrews *et al* (1999) didn't note it in the Jordan Bird Report for 1995–1997. A hunter, Mohamad Mahmoubi, shot an individual in Damour coastal area, 100 m asl, 7 May 2015 (Plate 8). The dead bird had a brilliant rosy-carmine head, breast and rump; heavy conical bill; dark brown wings and a white belly, appeared to be a male, and is the first record for Lebanon.

Plate 8. Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, shot by hunter, Damour coastal area, Lebanon, 7 May 2015.

LITERATURE CITED

Andrews, IJ, F Khoury & H Shirihai. 1999. Jordan Bird Report 1995–97. *Sandgrouse* 21: 10–35.

Balmer, D & K Betton. 2002. Around the Region. *Sandgrouse* 24: 76–80.

Flash, B. 1959. Höstobservationer i Libanon. *Fauna och Flora* 1959: 161–180.

Haraldsson, T. 2008. The first Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* for Lebanon? *Sandgrouse* 30(1): 90–91.

IUCN. 2015. www.iucnredlist.org/details/22710238/0. [Retrieved 2 November 2015]

Murdoch, DA & KF Betton. 2008. A checklist of the birds of Syria. *Sandgrouse* Supplement 2.

Muzinic, J. 2002. First record of white-headed black wheatear *(Oenanthe leucopyga)* in Croatia. *Israel Journal of Zoology* 48(3): 247–248.

Porter, R & S Aspinall. 2010. *Birds of the Middle East*. Christopher Helm, London.

Ramadan-Jaradi, G, T Bara & M Ramadan-Jaradi. 2008. Revised checklist of the birds of Lebanon 1999–2007. *Sandgrouse* 30(1): 22–69.

Ramadan-Jaradi, G & M Ramadan-Jaradi. 2001. The avifauna of Palm Islands Nature Reserve in Lebanon 1893–2000. *Lebanese Science Journal* 2(1): 17–35.

Salim, MA. 2010. First record of White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* for Iraq. *Sandgrouse* 32(2): 149–150.

Salim, MA, AF Al-Sheikhly, KA Majeed & RF Porter. 2012. An annotated checklist of the birds of Iraq. *Sandgrouse* 34(1): 4–43.

Shirihai, H. 1996. *The Birds of Israel*. Academic Press, London.

Shirihai, H, IJ Andrews, G Kirwan & P Davidson. 1999. A checklist of the birds of Israel and Jordan. *Sandgrouse* 21: 36–44.

Ghassan Ramadan-Jaradi, National Council for Scientific Research, Beirut, Lebanon. grjaradi@cnrs.edu.lb

Fouad Itani, Lebanese Sayd (hunting) Magazine, Quraytem, Beirut, Lebanon. fouaditani@yahoo.com

Common Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus* new for Turkmenistan

ELDAR A RUSTAMOV, SHANIYAZ MENLIEV & EVGENIY AGRYZKOV

A female Common Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus* was recorded by us in extreme southeast Turkmenistan at 37° 45′ 30″ N, 66° 22′ 01″ E on 8 May 2013, in the Koitendar'ya river valley near Khodjagaraul in the foothills of the western escarpment of the Kugitangtau (Koitendag) mountain range. The main characteristics of the species were clearly observed (profusely spotted and barred white with buff spots on the head). The bird stayed in a 4.5 ha area overgrown with Lucerne *Medicago sativa* and scattered Mulberry *Morus nigra*, Osage apple *Maclura pomifera*, Elm *Ulmus carpinifolia* and Plum *Prunus domestica* (Plate 1). The bird was shy, and frequented the same Mulberry tree most of the time, feeding on the fruits. Other avian spp recorded in the area included Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* (one nest with six eggs), Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (one pair), two pairs of Laughing Doves *Spilopelia senegalensis*, Masked Wagtail *Motacilla personata* (one pair), Indian House Sparrow *Passer* (*domesticus*) *indicus* (four large colonies in tops of Elm trees and under roofs of single-storey constructions in the vicinity), Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (three pairs) and Indian Myna *Acridotheres tristis* (three pairs under roofs). Both Long-tailed Shrike and Indian Myna have been recorded as hosts of Common Koel (Begum *et al* 2011). The bird was found dead (Plate 2), 14 May 2013, under the same Mulberry tree where it was watched feeding. The reason for its death is unknown but it was possibly killed by local people of the garden. The following measurements (mm) of the bird were taken: wing 180, tail 174, tarso-metatarsus 30, beak 27 (to forehead) and 21 (to nostril).

Plate 1. Habitat where the female Common Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus* was observed, Khodjagaraul, Turkmenistan. © *E Rustamov*

Plate 2. Dead female Common Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus*, Khodjagaraul, Turkmenistan, 14 May 2013. © *E Agryzkov*. Seen alive 8 May 2013 (see text).

Common Koel habitats include open forest, forest margins and undergrowth, sparse forest, outskirts of monsoon forests, mangrove forests and scrubby river valleys; it also frequents gardens and parks around settlements (Payne 2005). The habitats of the Koitendar'ya river are similar, gardens around settlement. The species is distributed in Asia from the Indus south to Sri Lanka, including the Maldives, east to the southern shore of the Yellow sea, southeast to the Greater and Lesser Sunda islands and Philippines (Payne 1997). The nearest populations to Turkmenistan are those in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent (that in eastern Pakistan is *c*650 km away). There are currently seventeen recognized subspecies (Payne 1997). Ali (1964) described the species as not only resident but also locally migratory. Payne (2005) considered the species to have great potential for colonizing new areas.

This is the first record of Common Koel for Turkmenistan (Rustamov 2015). It has not been recorded in Kazakhstan (Sklyarenko *et al* 2008, Wassink 2015) or Uzbekistan (Kashkarov *et al* 2008) and Ayé *et al* (2012) only include it in their appendix 1 (old vagrants, undocumented records and doubtfully recorded species, for Afghanistan). Mike Blair (*in litt*) considers that the species is uncommon, local, but regular in Afghanistan south of the Khyber range perhaps due to the big increase in small dams and local irrigation schemes there. It might be found in extreme southern Uzbekistan and southwestern Tajikistan in the future. Other OSME region records are vagrants to Iran, Kuwait, Socotra and UAE (Porter & Aspinall 2010). In Oman it is a fairly common but irregular visitor with records in every month except July (Eriksen & Victor 2013).

LITERATURE CITED

Ali, S. 1964. *The Book of Indian Birds*. Bombay NHS, Bombay.

Ayé, R, M Schweizer & T Roth. 2012. *Birds of Central Asia*. Bloomsbury, London.

Begum, S, A Moksnes, E Røskaft & BG Stokke. 2011. Interactions between the Asian koel (*Eudynamys scolopacea*) and its hosts. *Behaviour* 148(3): 325–340.

Eriksen, J & R Victor. 2013. *Oman Bird List*. 7th edn. CESAR, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat.

Kashkarov, RD, GR Welch & M Brombacher, M (eds). 2008. *Important Bird Areas in Uzbekistan*. Uzbekistan Society for the Protection of Birds, Tashkent.

Payne, RB. 1997. Family Cuculidae (Cuckoos). *In*: del Hoyo, J, A Elliott & J Sargatal (eds). *Handbook of the Birds of the World*. Vol 4. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

Payne, RB. 2005. *The Cuckoos*. Oxford University Press, UK.

Porter, R & S Aspinall. 2010. *Birds of the Middle East*. Christopher Helm, London.

Rustamov, EA. 2015. An annotated checklist of the birds of Turkmenistan. *Sandgrouse* 37: 28–56.

Sklyarenko SL, GR Welch & M Brombacher (eds). 2008. *Important Bird Areas in Kazakhstan*. Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan, Almaty.

Wassink, A. 2015. *The New Birds of Kazakhstan*. Wassink, De Cocksdorp, Texel, Netherlands.

Eldar A Rustamov, Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, ul. Khodjav Annadurdyeva, 57A. elldaru@mail.ru

First record of Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* for Azerbaijan

IVAN SJÖGREN

The Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* is a widespread species north and east of the OSME region (Harbard 2010). It breeds across Russia and east from the Urals as far as Kamchatka and south to Afghanistan, northern India and the sea of Japan. In the northern Urals, their breeding range is just inside the Western Palearctic, but every autumn they appear well inside the WP in seemingly increasing numbers. In autumn, however, most of the breeding population probably migrates through northeastern China, moving down to the species' winter quarters, which extend from central Nepal south to the Malay peninsula. The breeding range is vacated August–September and birds arrive in the winter range from mid October, departing again late March–early April. It is a passage migrant in Iran (Scott & Adhami 2006), a rare migrant in Kazakhstan (Wassink 2015) and there are a few observations in Georgia (Lepage 2016). There are regular records of *P. inornatus* as a winter visitor in Israel and Oman (IRDC 2015).

A group of Swedish birders, including IS and Emil Lundahl, discovered the first Yellow-browed Warbler for Azerbaijan during a three-day-long migration study at the Besh Barmag bottleneck (40° 59′ N 49° 13′ E *c*80 km northwest of Baku, Azerbaijan, Heiss 2013). On the last day, 28 October 2015, at 13.50 h, the group decided to scan the coastal bushland after morning migration had weakened. When reaching the wetter marsh area *c*1 km south of the rubbish tip, IS and EL heard a series of distinct calls, each a high pitched, multisyllabic "tze-veet". We recognized the calls as being those of Yellow-browed Warbler. The bird uttered 7 characteristic calls before IS and EL reached its position. We were standing 20–30 m from the source. Conditions were ideal as there were no other loud noises or calls at the same time. We localized the sound from a group of smaller trees at the edge of the vegetation before the beach. When arriving at the tree we did not see any movement and decided to text the other eight birdwatchers of the group. After 2–3 minutes IS and EL found a *Phylloscopus* warbler deep into the base of the tree. IS and EL positioned themselves on each side of the tree and tried to get a better view of the bird but we could only see its silhouette behind the branches. EL played a commercial recording of the call made by Yellow-browed Warbler from his mobile phone which the bird reacted to by flying towards him and moving up to the top of the dense tree. There IS saw the wing-bars during a split second view in his binoculars. Shortly after the bird took off and flew to the next gathering of trees further towards the rubbish tip.

The bird was located again when we were reunited with the other birders. Before meeting up, the bird uttered another two distinct calls. All group members agreed that the bird was a Yellow-browed Warbler. It was seen again briefly when flying into a smaller tamarisk. This was only 2–3 m from IS and Erik Sjögren who were able to see the birds' moss green back and clear wing-bars. The bird called a third series of two calls as it moved quickly to the same area of trees it was discovered in. Its behaviour was very much like the many Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* that were observed at the same place, often shy and quite skittish. It stayed low and deep in the trees so that the birding group only had brief views, it was lost after *c*30 minutes.

Identification was based on the typical calls together with what was seen during the few glimpses. Discussion of ID concerned Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*. The call of *P. humei* is described as a slightly descending 'tsui', 'chwee' or 'weesoo', drier than that of *P. inornatus* and more often repeated. Yellow-browed Warbler calls are a penetrating high-

pitched and more clearly rising 'suu-eet', 'swee-ooo' or 'seweest' (Clement 2014). Jonsson (1992) described them as "a longish indrawn tsueeht often with peculiar lisping tone" for *inornatus* and "... a clearly double-note tze-veet or sle-wee" for *humei*. Distinguishing *inornatus* from *humei* can be tricky in late autumn/winter as they both may become rather grey. During this time of year most sightings in Europe are separated by their calls (Luijendijk 2001). It is stated that *humei*'s call is rather prone to vary whilst *inornatus*'s not. Both taxa can react to each other's song and call. The calls of *humei* can roughly be divided into single-tone and multisyllabic calls. The latter are mostly disyllabic calls, but trisyllabic calls also occur. The 'classic' *humei* call is a somewhat sparrow-like 'tswee-up', with an obvious downward inflection. But they also have a less obviously multisyllabic call but still with a gap between syllables. There are examples of *inornatus* calls which are slightly more single-tone-like. This can thus be more *humei*-like. The duration of the contact call has proven to be a significant key to distinguishing the species in these cases (Luijendijk 2001).

The bird observed in Besh Barmag was only using one type of high-pitched call with a clear upward inflection and long duration. Without a recording device neither the length nor the frequency was measured. Even so the fact that the bird gave a typical call during the whole observation without any double-notes proves that the bird was not *humei*. The short views showing a deep moss-green back and strong wing bars also suggest that this individual was not a dull-colored bird but a very typical individual. We have good experience of Yellow-browed Warblers during the autumn in Sweden. IS has seen more than 15 birds there and heard more. The group leader Tomas Axén Haraldsson, an experienced guide in the region, concluded that this could only be Yellow-browed Warbler.

LITERATURE CITED

Clement, P. 2014. Yellow-browed Warbler (*Phylloscopus inornatus*). *In*: del Hoyo, J, A Elliott, J Sargatal, DA Christie & E de Juana (eds). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

Harbard, C. 2010. Yellow-browed Warbler. *Birdwatch* www.birdwatch.co.uk/categories/articleitem.asp?cate=22&topic=111&item=487.

Heiss, M. 2013. The importance of Besh Barmag bottleneck (Azerbaijan) for Eurasian migrant birds. *Acta Ornithologica* 48: 151–164.

Israeli Rarities and Distribution Committee. 2015. *Birds of Israel, Checklist*. www.israbirding.com/checklist.

Jonsson L. 1992. *Birds of Europe, with North Africa and the Middle East*. Christopher Helm, London.

Lepage, D. 2016. *List of the birds of the world, Georgia*. http://avibase.bsc-eoc.org/checklist.jsp?region=GE.

Luijendijk, TJC. 2001. Vocalisations of Yellow-browed Warbler and Hume's Leaf Warbler in autumn and winter. *Dutch Birding* 23(5): 275.

Scott DA & A Adhami. 2006. An updated checklist of the birds of Iran. *Podoces* 1(1/2): 1–16.

Wassink, A. 2015. *The New Birds of Kazakhstan*. Wassink, De Cocksdorp, Texel, Netherlands.

Ivan Sjögren, Mariestadsvägen 33, 121 50 Johanneshov, Sweden. Ivan_ls@hotmail.se

Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris* in the United Arab Emirates—first record for Arabia

MARK SMILES

On 11 October 2014, whilst birding in Al Mamzar park in Dubai, UAE, I came across a *Phylloscopus* warbler that I did not recognise. Having already found a Green Warbler *P. nitidus*, itself a rarity in the UAE with only 11 prior records and a Wood Warbler *P. sibilatrix*, only minutes earlier, it was easy to compare the size, structure and habits of this bird against these congeners. The bird was quite robust, being similar in size to the Wood Warbler, and was foraging deliberately amongst the lower branches of the canopy, often at head-height and offered good, prolonged views. The bird had two wing-bars, a long, tapering supercilium above a darkish eye-stripe that broadened behind the eye, slightly dingy underparts, grizzled cheeks, greyish-pink legs and a longish pink-based bill. I considered the possibility of it being either one of the Arctic Warbler *P. borealis/examinandus/xanthodryas* complex or a Two-barred Greenish Warbler *P. plumbetarsus*, though I couldn't recall if the presence of two wing-bars was possible on the former. The bird remained until the following day, being seen briefly on the 12th, but, rather frustratingly, was not heard to call during its two-day stay.

In the absence of any calls, the chances of conclusively identifying it initially seemed slim; however, photographs (some reproduced here, Plates 1–4) taken by myself and Simon Lloyd, who managed to see the bird a few hours after discovery, provided sufficient detail to supplement my field notes and led to eventual identification and acceptance by the Emirates Bird Records Committee as the first national record of Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*.

Plumage: Uniform olive-green upperparts with slightly darker and greyer tone to crown more evident in shade. Very long, slightly creamy, supercilium tapering to the rear above dark eye-stripe narrow on the lores, but broader behind the eye, cutting through whitish eye ring. Supercilium not bridging above upper mandible. Cheeks mottled greyish, with

Plate 1. Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*, Al Mamzar park, Dubai, 11 October 2014. Note the long, slightly creamy, supercilium, double wing-bars and large, pinkish-based bill. © *Mark Smiles*

Plate 2. Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*, Al Mamzar park, Dubai, 11 October 2014, showing the length of the first primary (p1) relative to the primary coverts. The emarginations on primaries 3–6 are also evident in this image. © *Mark Smiles*

Plate 3. Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*, Al Mamzar park, Dubai, 11 October 2014. In this image, the dusky, grizzled cheeks and breast are well illustrated, as is the long bill with pinkish cutting edge. © *Simon Lloyd*

greyish wash extending down onto upper breast. Underparts, including undertail coverts, whitish. Wings with two obvious creamy bars formed by pale tips to outer 5 or 6 greater coverts and 2 or 3 median coverts.

Bare parts: Bill noticeably long with dark brown upper mandible and pinkish-based lower mandible, both with pinkish cutting edges. Legs greyish-pink. Eye all dark with no obvious contrast with iris.

Call: Not heard.

Structure & habits: Comparable in size and bulk to Wood Warbler, feeding and moving deliberately in lower branches of trees, unlike the quick, nervous actions of canopy-feeding Green Warbler seen minutes earlier. Primary p1 extends well beyond greater coverts. Emarginations on p3–6, wing-tip formed by p4–5 and p2 approximately equal in length to p7–8.

Plate 4. Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*, Al Mamzar park, Dubai, 11 October 2014. Close-up of bill showing large dark smudge on lower mandible. © *Mark Smiles*

Identification was by no means straightforward, being largely a process of elimination in the early stages. The images obtained showed that the length of the first primary (p1) extended well beyond the primary coverts, allowing Arctic Warbler (*sensu lato*), whose first primary projects a mere 3mm beyond the greater coverts, to be quickly discounted.

The other possible *Phylloscopus* warblers with wing-bars and plain tertials normally encountered in the Western Palaearctic were also considered *ie* Greenish *P.trochiloides*, Two-barred Greenish and Green Warblers. Comparing the images with wing formula data

Table 1. Comparison of features of the Al Mamzar *Phylloscopus* with possible confusion species/congeners recorded in the Western Palearctic. Data summarised from Van der Vliet *et al* 2001.

	Al Mamzar bird	*P. borealis*	*P. plumbetarsus*	*P. trochiloides*	*P. nitidus*
Upperparts	Olive with slightly greyer crown	Darker olive than *trochiloides*	Dark olive, often with greyish crown	Olive-green	Bright olive-green
Underparts	Dingy across breast	Dingy across breast	Usually clean whitish	Clean whitish	Variably yellow-washed
Movements	Deliberate	Deliberate	Quick & nervous	Quick & nervous	Quick & nervous
Greater covert bar	Across 5–6 GCs	6 GCs max	5–7 GCs	4–5 GCs	6 GCs max
Length p1 vs greater coverts	Well beyond GCs	+3 mm	+5–10 mm	+5–10 mm	+5–10 mm
Length p2	Level with p7–8	p5–6	p7–8	p9–10	p6–7
Emarginations	p3–6	p3–5	p3–6	p3–6	p3–6
Primary projection (of tertial length)	c55–60%	70–90%	55–65%	55–65%	55–70%
Wingtip	p4–5	p3–4	p4–5	p4–5	p3–4

from Van der Vliet *et al* (2001, Table 1) revealed that the combination of emarginations and relative lengths of the primary feathers eliminated both Greenish and Green Warblers, but not Two-barred Greenish Warbler. However, the bird's habits, size and very strong bill, did not fit this species either.

Considering further possible eastern species, the leg colour was too dark for the smaller Pale-legged Leaf Warbler *P.tenellipes* (*sensu lato*), the upperparts not contrasting enough with either crown or rump and the bill rather too long, albeit similarly marked. Both Western *P. occipitalis* and Eastern Crowned Warblers *P. coronatus* were eliminated by virtue of the lack of any sign of a median crown stripe and by the Mamzar bird's large bill being pinkish, not orange, and strongly marked on the underside. This latter feature was particularly striking in many of the photographs taken and this, together with the plumage characteristics, correlated strongly with Large-billed Leaf Warbler (Clement 2016a–d). This conclusion was further supported by comments from Paul Leader (Hong Kong) and Peter Kennerley (UK) and fellow birdwatchers in the UAE.

According to Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), Large-billed Leaf Warbler is a Himalayan species, inhabiting both deciduous and coniferous forest, usually near mountain streams, between 1800–3700 m in northern Pakistan and west Arunchal eastwards through southern and southeastern Tibet, west China and northern Myanmar. Grimmett *et al* (2008) map the species as breeding in the Safed Koh range of northern Pakistan. It may therefore breed in adjacent Afghanistan. It winters in evergreen hill forests in Sri Lanka and the Western Ghats, occurring widely on passage in northwest and northeast India. The species arrives in its wintering grounds from the end of August or early September onwards, remaining until as late as the following May (Clement 2016a), hence its appearance as a vagrant in the Middle East is perhaps not entirely surprising.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Paul Leader, Peter Kennerley and members of the EBRC for their comments and assistance in the identification of this bird, Mike Blair for information on taxonomy and the OSME Regional List, Simon Lloyd for providing additional photographs and to Oscar Campbell for helpful comments and advice whilst reviewing an initial draft of this paper.

LITERATURE CITED

Clement, P. 2016a. Large-billed Leaf-warbler (*Phylloscopus magnirostris*). *In*: del Hoyo, J, A Elliott, J Sargatal, DA Christie & E de Juana (eds). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. [Retrieved www.hbw.com/node/58891, 17 May 2016]

Clement, P. 2016b. Pale-legged Leaf-warbler (*Phylloscopus tenellipes*). *In*: del Hoyo, J, A Elliott, J Sargatal, DA Christie & E de Juana (eds). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. [Retrieved www.hbw.com/node/58889, 17 May 2016]

Clement, P. 2016c. Western Crowned Leaf-warbler (*Phylloscopus occipitalis*). *In*: del Hoyo, J, A Elliott, J Sargatal, DA Christie & E de Juana (eds). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. [Retrieved www.hbw.com/node/58893, 17 May 2016]

Clement, P. 2016d. Eastern Crowned Leaf-warbler (*Phylloscopus coronatus*). *In*: del Hoyo, J, A Elliott, J Sargatal, DA Christie & E de Juana (eds). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. [Retrieved www.hbw.com/node/58894, 17 May 2016]

Grimmett, R, T Roberts & T Inskipp. 2008. *Birds of Pakistan*. Christopher Helm, London.

Rasmussen, PE & JC Anderton. 2012. *Birds of South Asia. The Ripley Guide Vols 1&2*. Second edn. National Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian Institution), Michigan State University and Lynx Edicions, USA/Barcelona.

Van der Vliet, RE, PR Kennerley & BJ Small. 2001. Identification of Two-barred, Greenish, Bright-green and Arctic Warblers. *Dutch Birding* 23: 191–195.

Mark Smiles, PO Box 17836, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. marksmiles63@gmail.com

Unusual breeding site for Brown-necked Ravens *Corvus ruficollis*, Luxor, Egypt

UFFE GJØL SØRENSEN

Over the years 1980–2012, I have visited Luxor, Egypt, seven times, each time recording Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis* west of the Nile in typical habitat along the Nile valley fringe or in mountains around the Valleys of the Kings. On my four most recent visits, I have recorded the species in Luxor city.

9–11 March 1985: two Brown-necked Ravens (BNRs) seemingly defending a territory in the garden of the Winter Palace hotel in the heart of the city. They were in conflict with a pair of Yellow-billed Kites *Milvus aegyptius* with a newly fledged juvenile.

25–28 January 1990: a BNR was by Luxor temple on 25 January. This is next to the garden of the Winter Palace hotel (which I did not visit).

18–22 March 1999: on 19 March a BNR pair was seen at Karnak temple (further north but also in the city, close to and east of the river) apparently defending a territory in direct combat with Hooded Crows *Corvus cornix*.

14–18 February 2012: I recorded BNRs on both my visits to Karnak temple, 14 and 17 February. On the second date, a pair was adding material to their nest on top of a column's capital. Hooded Crows around the temple were clearly 'not happy' with the presence of the BNRs. From this nest-site, the nearest mountainous desert is across the Nile *c*3–4 km away, while east of the Nile the nearest fringe to the desert is *c*7 km away. In Egypt, this seems to be the first record of a BNR nest site located away from the desert environment (Goodman & Meininger 1989, Sherif Baha el Din & Ahmed Riad pers comm). It is surprising that BNRs can settle in one of the most visited tourist places in Egypt.

The main breeding season in Egypt for BNR is February–mid May, with nestlings noted from early March (Goodman & Meininger 1989). This coincides with the high season for tourism where literally thousands of visitors enter the Karnak temple every day. Despite this human invasion, I believe that the temple area increasingly has become a relatively peaceful place. Access is now highly regulated and predictable. Few if any traditional local activities take place *eg* no

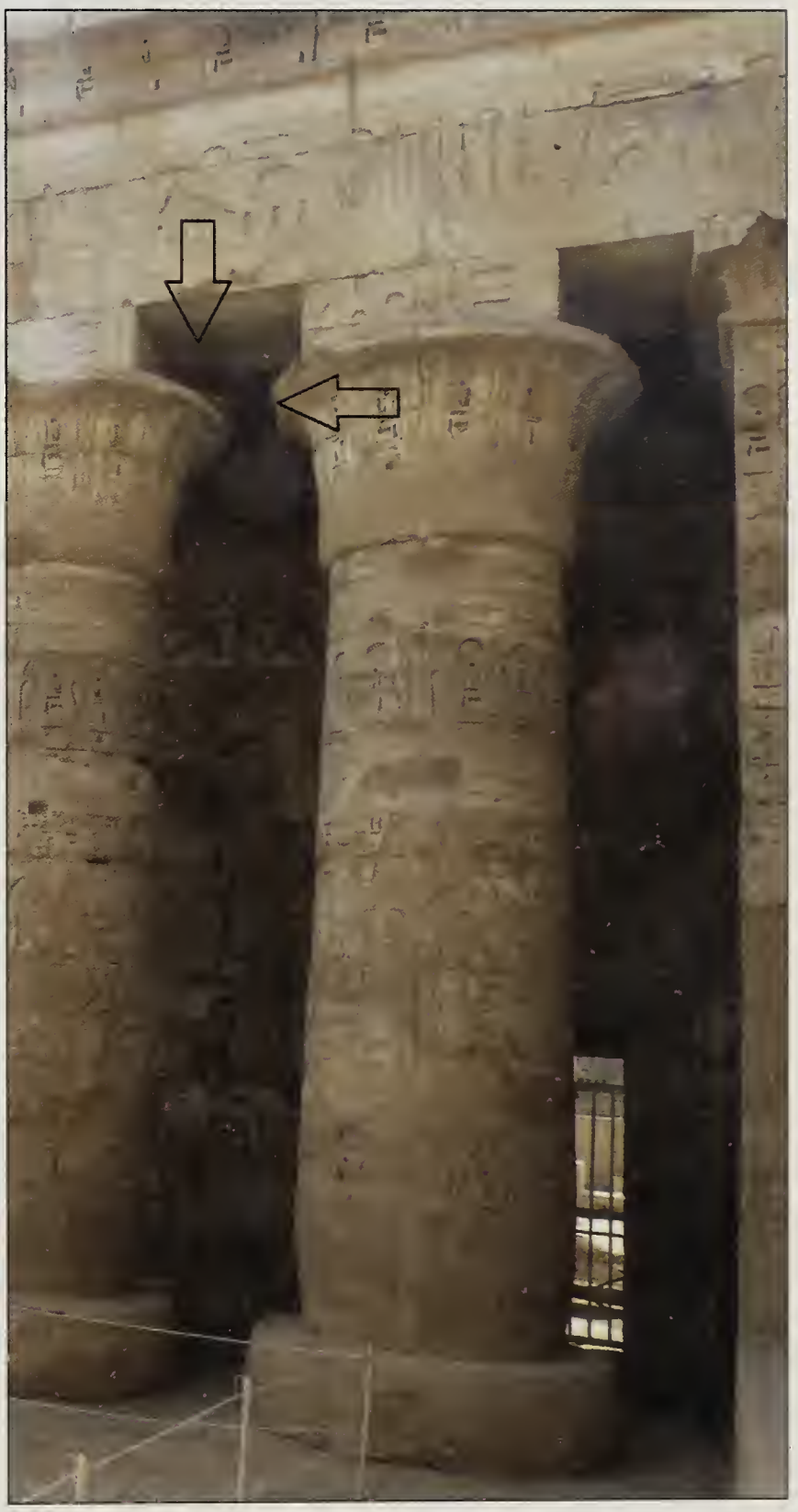


Plate 1. Location of Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis* nest on a column's capital at Medinet Habu temple, Luxor, Egypt. © *Uffe Gjøl Sørensen*

Plate 2. Close-up of Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis* nest at Medinet Habu temple, Luxor, Egypt (see Plate 1), with head of brooding Brown-necked Raven just visible. © *Uffe Gjøl Sørensen*

children are running around, no goat-herding. During daytime, the tourists all enter from a main entrance and the vast majority only visit the core area of the temple. After sunset, the light-and-sound shows are controlled and most of the temple is completely abandoned and quiet in the dark. The BNR nest site is located in a roped-off corner. At the same time, the location ensures two other qualities: the nest, up under the ceiling, is in permanent shade, hidden and shielded from the strong sunlight and the position on the top of a column ensures protection from mammalian predators. The latter is a real threat as I have recorded Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* in both the two great temples in Luxor. The morning I located the BNRs' nest, a Red Fox was enjoying the heat from the rising sun on top of the Great Hypostyle hall in the centre of Karnak temple *ie* <100 m from the nest-site. At Luxor temple, in 1990, a Red Fox had its den halfway up the 25 m monumental entrance wall, and in 2012 a fox left the exact same den one early morning.

Later, again on 17 February 2012, I came across another example of a temple being a breeding place for BNRs. In the middle of the Medinet Habu temple, a pair had an exactly similar location of their nest on a capital to a column (Plates 1, 2). Brooding had started and it was fun to see the watchful BNR on the nest checking out the tourists passing right below. The much less visited and smaller Medinet Habu temple is located on the fringe of the desert west of the Nile river and much closer to normal BNR feeding habitat. BNRs adjusting to nesting in human-controlled landscapes away from the desert and in places with thousands of visitors seems a novel development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Lene Smith made linguistic improvements to the ms.

LITERATURE CITED

Goodman, SM & PL Meininger. 1989. *The Birds of Egypt*. Oxford University Press, UK.

Uffe Gjøl Sørensen, Overgaden Oven Vandet 68, 2, DK-1415 Copenhagen K, Denmark. contact@ugsorensen.dk

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus* recorded in Oman

PER ØYSTEIN KLUNDERUD, MAGNUS ULLMAN & THOR ØSTBYE

On 24 November 2014 we arrived mid-morning at Qatbit motel (Sargeant *et al* 2008), Dhofar governorate, Oman, together with a group of Norwegian and Swedish birdwatchers (by arrangement of Klunderud Natur og Kultur). After checking in some of us started birding immediately, and TØ soon discovered a drongo just behind the motel building. He suspected it was an Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus* rather than Black Drongo *D. macrocercus*. The rest of us were soon alerted and we all enjoyed the bird as it hawked insects from look-out posts close to the motel building. Identification as Ashy Drongo was confirmed. For the rest of the day as well as on 25–26 November the bird was easily spotted in the same couple of trees, and only on single occasions we found it a little further away in the motel garden, but it always soon returned to the original location. When we left Qatbit at noon on 27 November we had not been able to relocate the drongo, and as it had been very stationary on previous days, we concluded that it had left the garden during the night or early morning.

DESCRIPTION (Plates 1–5)

The bird was obviously a drongo with overall blackish plumage, perching on open branches with quite vertical carriage and with its long and deeply forked tail hanging down. Nape, mantle and scapulars were a glossy black with a slight bluish tinge, while

Plate 1. Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*, typically perching high with wide view, Qatbit, Oman, 24 November 2014. © *Thor Østbye*. Note dark breast and belly with very sparse whitish fringing as well as matte tinge in contrast to glossy neck side.

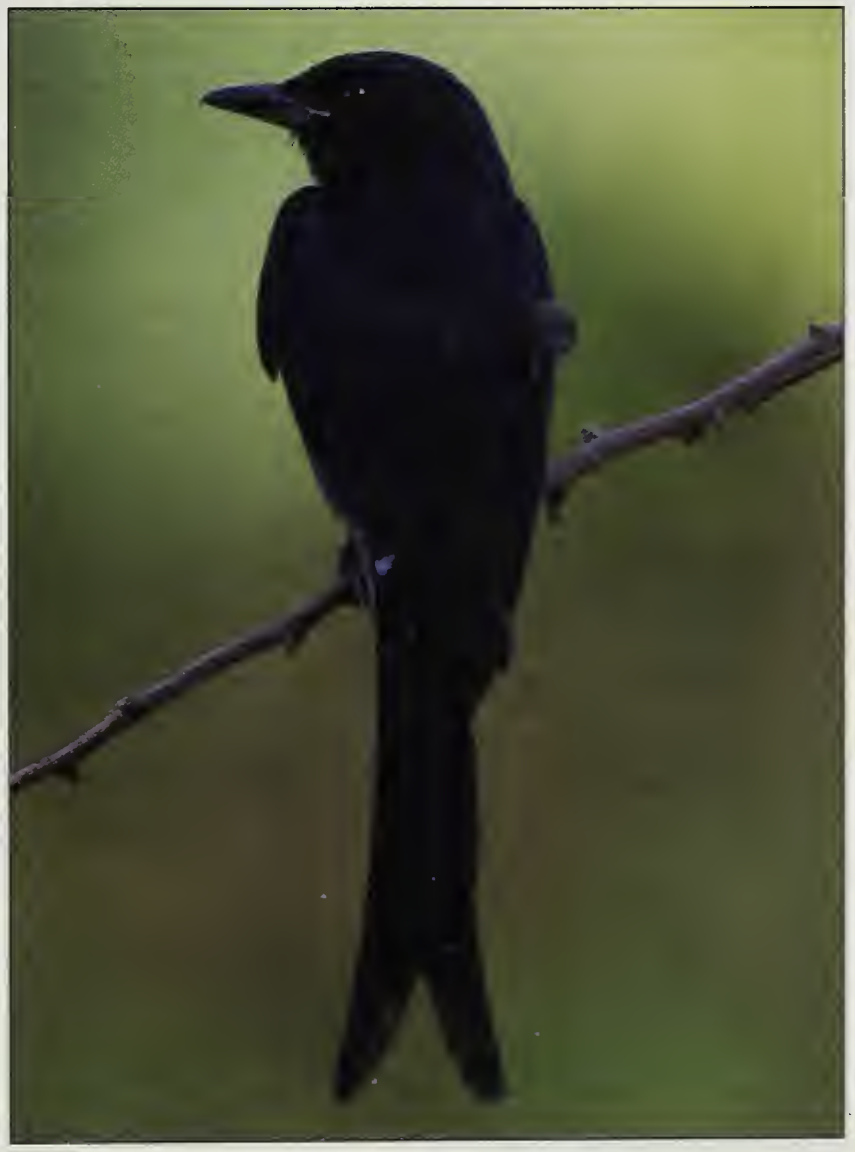


Plate 2. Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus* Qatbit, Oman, 24 November 2014. © *Thor Østbye*. Bluish black upperparts not very different from Black Drongo. Narrow tail typical for Ashy. Most tail-feathers fresh and apparently recently moulted while outer two old and worn.

Plate 3. Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*, frequently hawking for insects, Qatbit, Oman, 25 November 2014. © *Thor Østbye*

wing-coverts and primaries were a contrasting brownish black (showing that it was a first winter bird). Breast and belly were dull grey, again in contrast to the glossy black neck-side and cheek and with a few sparse off-white fringes on the central breast. Vent and undertail-coverts were paler, obviously spotted off-white. Most tail-feathers were fresh and apparently recently moulted while the outer two were old and worn (Plate 2), probably also indicating that it was a first-winter bird (although we have been unable to find relevant information on moult in Ashy Drongo).

IDENTIFICATION

Breast colouration is important in separating Ashy and Black Drongos since first winter Black Drongos show a greater contrast between blackish upper breast with some gloss and lower breast and belly which are obviously paler and with extensive off-white fringing (Grimmett *et al* 1998, inspection of on-line and other photos). Also, we noted in the field that the Qatbit bird lacked the white rictal spot at the base of the bill (typically present in Black Drongo). A minority of our photos of the bird seem to show a pale gape line. Ashy Drongo generally displays a narrower and more deeply forked tail than Black, but the difference is not great and tail-fork is subject to abrasion and moult. It is open to discussion whether tail shape can be used to identify the Qatbit bird.

DISCUSSION

The rather closed habitat of the Qatbit motel garden is much the same setting as the species favours in its usual range, while Black Drongo is a bird of savannah type open grassland [though a Black Drongo at Qatbit, with its barren desert surroundings, would

Plate 4. Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus* Qatbit, Oman, 24 November 2014. © *Thor Østbye*. No obvious white rictal spot at base of bill (see text).

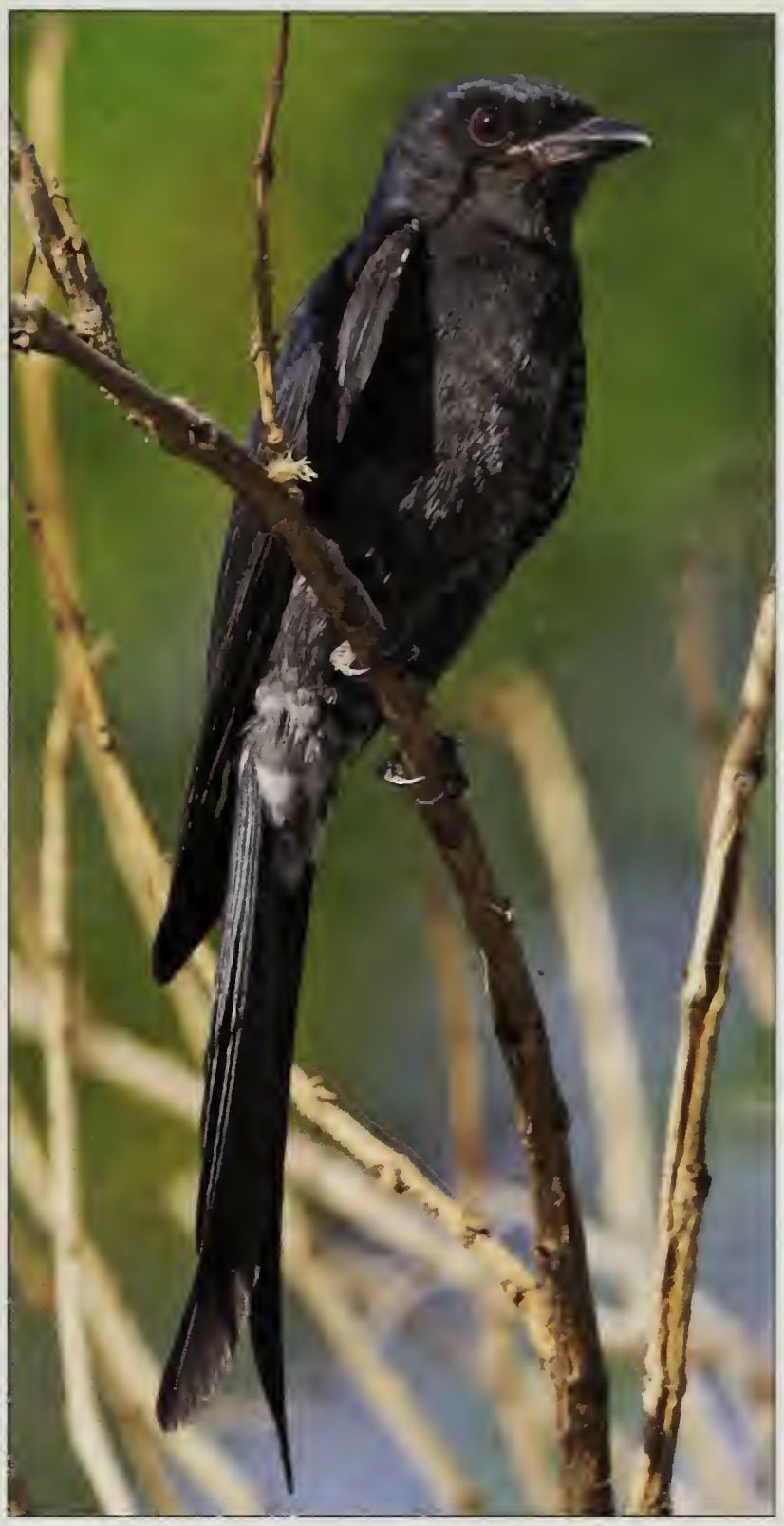


Plate 5. Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus* Qatbit, Oman, 25 November 2014. © *Thor Østbye*. Vent and undertail-coverts heavily spotted off-white in contrast to dark greyish black belly, typical for immature Ashy Drongo.

not have much choice and would also be confined to the motel garden]. Ashy Drongo is a migratory species. Its subspecies *longicaudatus* breeds in the southern Himalayas and winters over most of India, while paler subspecies breed further east. The Oman record is of *longicaudatus*.

This is the first record of Ashy Drongo for Oman, while there are 7 records of Black Drongo (Eriksen & Victor 2013). There are 9 records of Ashy Drongo in United Arab Emirates, 2006–2015, and 7 records there of Black Drongo, while several more drongo records (1977–2016) are under review (www.uaebirding.com). There are 3 records of Ashy Drongo, 2010–2013, in Kuwait (www.birdsofkuwait.com) and 2 records, 2014–2016, in Iran (iranbirdrecords.blog.ir). A possible first Ashy Drongo for Israel was reported in 2014 but the record is still pending (www.israbirding.com/checklist). The recent occurrence of Ashy Drongo in the Middle East could simply be due to better observer coverage and knowledge. If the increase is genuine it may possibly be due to the recent availability of suitable habitat (farmed areas, suburban parks, golf courses and plantations of mature

watered trees) as has been suggested for the Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* (Babbington & Campbell 2016).

LITERATURE CITED

Babbington, J & O Campbell. 2016. Recent status and occurrence of Crested Honey Buzzards *Pernis ptilorhynchus* in the Arabian peninsula, with emphasis on Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. *Sandgrouse* 38: 12–22.

Eriksen, J & R Victor. 2013. *Oman Bird List*. 7th edn. Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat.

Grimmett, R, C Inskipp & T Inskipp. 1998. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. Christopher Helm, London.

Sargeant, DE, H & J Eriksen. 2008. *Birdwatching Guide to Oman*. Al Roya, Muscat.

Per Øystein Klunderud, Åssideveien 525, 3322 Fiskum, Norway.

Magnus Ullman, Triangeln 13, SE-272 38 Brantevik, Sweden. ullman.apus@telia.com

Thor Østbye, Hensåsveien 210, 2975 Vang i Valdres, Norway.

Olive-backed Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni* in Hormozgan, south Iran, January 2016

MAGNUS ULLMAN & MATTIAS ULLMAN

In January 2016 we birded in Hormozgan, south Iran, together with Per Øystein Klunderud and Babak Musavi. On 25 January 2016 we visited Bahmani near Minab (27.18300° N, 57.04076° E) where we found two Olive-backed Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni* and later two more *c*500 m from the first two. The following day, 26 January, we visited Jahad park near Bandar Abbas (27.26071° N, 56.41677° E) where we found another 2 Olive-backed Pipits. Interestingly, we did not record any Tree Pipits *A. trivialis* or Red-throated Pipits *A. cervinus* during our 10-day stay in Hormozgan. In Bahmani the birds appeared in cultivations with short grass (1–2 decimetres high) and bushes and trees (Plate 1). In Jahad park they visited similar habitat: short grass and quite sparse trees. The birds were mainly feeding in the grass and invisible to us until they took flight a few times, either disappearing or settling in a bush (Plate 2) or a tree (Plates 3, 4). This would appear to be suitable wintering habitat.

Our photos (of at least three individuals) show birds with very faint upperparts streaking, confirming that they belong to the subspecies *A. h. yunnanensis*, which breeds throughout much of Siberia, northern Mongolia *etc* and winters from India to southeast Asia. When you are lucky to find a rare passerine you often first notice the bird by call before actually seeing it—and this was the case in each of these three instances. The call of Olive-backed Pipit is sometimes compared to Tree Pipit, but although they are a bit

Plate 1. Four Olive-backed Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni* were feeding in the grass between the bushes and trees in the gardens of Bahmani, Hormozgan, Iran. © *Magnus Ullman*

Plate 2. An Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Bahmani, Hormozgan, Iran, 25 January 2016. © *Mattias Ullman*

Plate 3. Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Jahad park, Hormozgan, Iran, 26 January 2016. © *Magnus Ullman*

Plate 4. Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, a different individual from that in Plate 3, Jahad park, Hormozgan, Iran, 26 January 2016. © *Mattias Ullman*

similar, Olive-backed's is quite distinctive. To say that it is somewhere between the calls of Tree Pipit and Red-throated Pipit might give a hint of its quality. It is a thin, somewhat squeezed *tzzi*, thinner and fainter than Tree Pipit. At times you may even be more likely to disregard it as a feeble Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* than a Tree Pipit.

There are two previous records in Iran (Khaleghizadeh *et al* 2011): one on 21 January 1992 in a public park in Zabol, Sistan & Baluchestan, and one on 27 March 2001 in Nik-Shahr, also Sistan & Baluchestan. Considering the apparent rarity of Olive-backed Pipit in Iran our 6 birds were a surprise.

LITERATURE CITED

Khaleghizadeh, A & 14 others. 2011. Rare Birds in Iran in 1980–2010. *Podoces* 6: 1–48.

Magnus Ullman, Triangeln 13, SE-272 38 Brantevik, Sweden. ullman.apus@telia.com

Mattias Ullman, Sörbyholmsvägen 54-0, SE 231 72 Anderslöv, Sweden. mattias.ullman@telia.com

From the Rarities Committees

Ian Harrison (compiler)

Observers who have had a country first record accepted by a rarities committee are encouraged to write it up as a note or paper for publication.

CYPRUS

Cyprus Rarities Committee: Jane Stylianou (chair), Melis Charalambides, Stavros Christodoulides, Hugh Buck, Chris Stavrou, Martin Hellicar and Johannes Honold. A full list of bird spp requiring rarity descriptions and rare bird report forms are available from Jane Stylianou janestycy@yahoo.co.uk to whom claims should be sent. Since the report in *Sandgrouse* 37 (2) the committee has accepted the following records:

Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor.* One Kouklia dam, Famagusta 12–29 May 2015. (A Grey, P Beckenham, M Hellicar). First record.

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes.* One Akrotiri salt lake 23 September 2015 (A Turtle). Two Akrotiri salt lake 6 October 2015 (J Neal). Rare, less than annual autumn migrant.

Caspian Plover *Anarhynchus asiaticus.* One Paralimni lake 24 March 2014 (J Donaldson). One Mandria, Paphos, 9–18 March 2015 (D Gebauer). 21st & 22nd records since 2000.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni.* One Akrotiri salt lake 28 April 2015 (P Saunders, H Ewing). Rare, less than annual migrant.

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla.* One first winter Makenzy beach, Larnaca, 6 December 2014–4 January 2015 (J Smart). Seventh record.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus.* One Lady's Mile, Limassol, 21 May 2015 (P Beckenham, A Grey). Fourth record. Last record 2009.

Little Swift *Apus affinis.* Three Zakaki marsh, Limassol, 12 January 2015 (K & R Howard). One Akhna dam, Famagusta, 15 April 2015 (G Bowman). 15th & 16th records.

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus.* One ringed Polis reed beds 10 March 2014 (A Crabtree). Fifth record since 1999.

Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus* [*bonelli*] *orientalis.* One Souni, Limassol, 11 August 2015 (J Neal, P Smith). Spring passage migrant, very rare in autumn.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris.* One ringed Polis reed beds 21 May 2015 (A Crabtree, M Preston). Rare, less than annual passage migrant.

Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum.* One Goudi 17 April 2014 (P Saunders). One Anavargos Hills, Paphos, 27 April 2015 (M Smith). 13th & 14th records since 1994.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus.* One Livadi tou Pashia, Troodos, 9 November 2014 (C & D Lamsdell). 11th record since 1993.

Western Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola* (*torquatus*) *maurus.* One male Spiros pool, Larnaca salt lake 28 March 2015 (L & A Crane).

'Caspian' Stonechat *Saxicola* (*torquatus*) *maurus hemprichii.* One male Mandria, Paphos, 3 April 2015 (L & A Crane).

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha.* One male Paphos headland 13 April 2015 (I Bloomer). One female Lady's Mile, Limassol, 26 April 2015 (B Rasmussen). Six females Latchi beach, Paphos, 28 April 2015 (K Dover) – largest group ever recorded in Cyprus. One male Pegeia, Paphos, 1 May 2015 (C Constantinou). One male Paphos headland 2 May 2015 (C Hughes). One female cape Drepanum, Paphos, 3 May 2015 (T Martin). Rare but increasing passage migrant.

Collared Flycatcher *Fidecula albicollis.* One Akrotiri gravel pits 28 August 2015 (L Crane, A Crane, J Neal, J Stapley, P Curry). One Mandria, Platres, 2 October 2015 (L & A Crane). Spring passage migrant, very rare in autumn.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula* [*parva*] *parva.* One ringed Neo Horio, Paphos, 13 October 2015. (A Crabtree, M Preston). Rare, less than annual passage migrant.

Eurasian Crimson-winged Finch. *Rhodopechys* (*sangineus*) *sanguineus.* One

female Paphos headland 12 March 2015 (T Drew). Third record.

EGYPT

The Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee comprises Sherif Baha El Din (chair), Frédéric Jiguet (secretary), Wed Abdel Latif Ibrahim, Richard Bonser, Andrea Corso, Pierre André Crochet, Andrew Grieve, Richard Hoath and Manuel Schweizer. Official external advisers are Istvan Moldovan, Ahmed Riad and Mary Megalli. Claims should be sent to eorc.secretary@gmail.com. See also www.chn-france.org/eorc/eorc.php?id_content=1 where claim forms can be downloaded.

IRAN

The Iran Bird Records Committee currently comprises Abolghasem Khaleghizadeh (recorder), Mohammad Tohidifar, Parviz Bakhtiatir, Seyed Babk Miusavi, Mohammad E Sehhatisabet, Meysam Ghasemi, Ali Khani, Abbas Ashoori and Ahmad Barati plus Derek Scott, Richard Porter and Ian Harrison as external consultants as and when necessary. Claims should be sent to Abolghasem Khaleghizadeh akhaleghizadeh@gmail.com.

ISRAEL

The Israel Rarities and Distribution Committee comprises Avner Cohen (secretary), Barak Granit, Yoav Perlman and Yosef Kiat. Claims should be sent to Avner Cohen israbirding@gmail.com. See also www.israbirding.com/irdc where claim forms can be downloaded. The committee has accepted the following records since the report in *Sandgrouse* 37(2).

Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis.* One, probably of *fabalis* group, Agamon Hula, 2 March 2015 (Y Eshbol). Fourth record. The previous record was winter 2013/14 at the same site and the assumption is that this is a returning individual.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus.* 1 adult Kfar Barukh reservoir, Jizreel valley, 10 November 2015–early January 2016. (E Amir, B Granit *et al*). Sixth record and the first since 1993.

Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha.* One Idan, north Arava, 30 January 2015 to date (E Haviv, L Cabra *et al*). Second record, first in 1958.

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca.* Three off Nitzanim beach, south Mediterranean coast, 17 February 2015 (J Meyrav) and 18 February 2015 off Ashkelon, 15 km south (R Shaish). Eighth record.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis.* One off Jaffa 6 January 2015 (S Alterman *et al*). Seventh record.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus.* One North Beach, Eilat, 6–18 June 2014 (S Shalev *et al*). First record.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena.* One adult North Beach, Eilat, 3–17 May 2015 (D de Boer *et al*, Plate 1). Fifth record, first since 1996.

Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor.* One adult Km20 saltpans, Eilat, 14 November 2014–4 February 2015 (H Shohat *et al*). Second record.

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis.* One immature Tirat Zvi, Bet She'an valley, 17–18 September 2015 (G Leitner *et al*). 25th record. This species now occurs regularly.

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens.* One immature Harod and Jizreel valleys, 9 July–14 October 2015 (S London, B Granit *et al*). Eighth record.

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos negevensis.* An immature female Hai Bar Carmel national park, 13 June 2015 (Y Miller *et al*). Trapped 22 June 2015 and

Plate 1. Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* 8 May 2015 North Beach, Eilat, Israel. © *Avi Meir*

Plates 2 & 3. Senegal Thick-Knee *Burhinus senegalensis*, Ma'agan Michael, Israel, 8 July 2015. © *Oz Horine*

Plates 4 & 5. Lesser Sand Plover *Anarhynchus* [*mongolus*] *atrifrons* 23 July 2014 Ma'ayan Zvi, Carmel coast, Israel. © *Rony Livne*

taken into care. Formerly bred but now only a few records.

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*. An immature Bet Nir, south Judean plains, 30 January 2015–end of the year (E Hadad *et al*) and another immature, migrating over Kisra, west Galilee, 31 March 2015 (R Segali). Eighth and ninth records.

Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii*. An adult or near-adult Ma'ale Akrabim, northeast Negev, 28 November 2015 (E Fast) and wadi Ze'elim, Judean desert (I Donitza). Irregular. Previous record 2013.

Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*. One immature, picked up exhausted near Rahat, north Negev, 28 March 2015. Taken into care, released 2 May 2015 (S Landau, A Ben Dov). Second record.

Senegal Thick-knee *Burhinus senegalensis*. One Ma'agan Michael, 8 July 2015 (C Rozen *et al*, Plates 2, 3). First record.

Lesser Sand-plover *Anarhynchus* [*mongolus*] *atrifrons*. One Ma'ayan Zvi, Carmel coast 20–25 July 2014 (B Granit *et al*, Plates 4, 5). Fifth record.

Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*. One Nizzana 29 September 2014 (J Meyrav, L Tiller). Still a major rarity, previously recorded 2011.

Pin-tailed Snipe *Gallinago stenura*. One ringed Kfar Ruppin 7–14 October 2015 (G Goddard, D de Boer *et al*) and one Nir Oz, northwest Negev, 12–13 October 2015 (D Standing, B Granit *et al*). Ninth and tenth records.

'Western Black-backed Gull' *Larus fuscus graellsii*. One Ma'agan Michael 28 November 2014 (A Ben Dov). Identification verified by colour-ring, ringed in 2012 as adult male in mixed colony north Norway. Seen subsequently Ashdod March and December 2015. First record.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*. One second winter bird Ma'agan Michael 23 April–16 May 2009 (S Agmon, A Mayrose *et al*). Third record.

Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*. One North Beach, Eilat, 23 September 2014 (S Shalev). Rare; previously recorded 2012.

White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*. Nest with three eggs on platform off Eilat, August 2015 (N Segev *et al*). First confirmed breeding record (although this species breeds regularly on islands off south Sinai).

Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia* (*orientalis*) *meena*. One first winter bird Yotvata, 6–7 November 2014 (I Shanni *et al*) and one there 12 November 2015 (C Rozen). 11th & 12th records.

Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*. One Ashkelon national park 27 March–15 April 2015 (O Lewy *et al*), one Km20 saltpans, Eilat, 18 May 2015 (C Rozen), one Km76, central Arava, 21 November 2015 (S & Y Shiff). 15th–17th records.

Ashy Drongo *Edolius leucophaeus*. One Gan Shmuel, north coastal plains, 3–15 December 2014 (I Solnik *et al*, Plate 6). First record.

Arabian Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni eremodites*. Two Haifa 28–29 March 2015 (E Peretz *et al*) and one Bet Yanay beach, central Mediterranean coast, 23 October 2015 (I Solnik). Very few records away from south Negev and Arava.

Green Warbler *Phylloscopus* (*trochiloides*) *nitidus*.One ringed Yeruham lake, central Negev, 2 October 2014 (Y Zvik, R Livne *et al*). Seventh record.

Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis*. One first winter ringed Agamon Hula 18 August 2015 (Y Charka). This species is again on the rarity list.

Plate 6. Ashy Drongo *Edolius leucophaeus* 15 December 2014 Gan Shmuel, north coastal plains, Israel. © *Meir Levy*

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*. One ringed Eilat 5 October 2015 (C Rozen *et al*). Tenth record.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*. One ringed Yeruham lake, central Negev, 22 August 2014 (Y Zvik, R Livne *et al*). 11th record.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*. One male Nafkha farm, central Negev, 20–21 November 2014 (B Granit *et al*) and another there 14 November 2015 (B Granit and S Alterman). Remains on rarities list.

'Eastern' Nightingale *Luscinia* (*megarhynchos*) *golzii*. One ringed Eilat 5 May 2015 (N Weiss *et al*). Sixth record.

Yellow-throated Sparrow *Gymnoris xanthocollis*. One first winter Kfar Ruppin, Bet She'an valley, 25 September 2015 (Y Popper). Fourth record (previous record 2002).

Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*. One male and one female Yanuv, Heffer valley, 11 November 2014 (N Pevzner). Previously occurred regularly and bred occasionally but no records since 1994.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*. One ringed Tsor'a, Judean plains, 20 November 2014 and another Neve Eitan, Bet She'an valley, 5 December 2014 (both Y Kiat *et al*).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*. One Km20 saltpans, Eilat, 21 November 2014 (N Eden).

The following claims were rejected: Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* (off Betzet beach, north Mediterranean coast, 20 Dec 2014), Rüppell's Vulture × Eurasian Griffon Vulture *Gyps rueppellii* × *Gyps fulvus* (Gamla, Golan Heights, 15 Jul 2014). White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus* (Zikim beach, south Mediterranean coast, 2 Oct 2015). Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia* (*orientalis*) *meena* (Km20 date plantations, Eilat, 16 Nov 2014). Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paludicola* (Heimar reservoir, south Dead Sea, 21 Jul 2015). Black-crowned Sparrow-lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* (Eilat, 2 Jan and 10 Dec 2014). Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* (Ramat Hovav, north Negev, 11 Nov 2014). Record withdrawn: Saunders's Tern *Sternula saundersi* (North Beach, Eilat, 18 Aug 2015).

JORDAN

The Jordan Bird Records Committee comprises Fares Khoury (secretary), Richard Porter, Ian Andrews, Feras Rahahleh and Khaldun Al-Omari. Claims should be sent to Fares Khoury at avijordan2000@yahoo.com.

KUWAIT

The Kuwait Ornithological Rarities Committee comprises Mike Pope (chair), AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan (secretary), Markus Craig, Neil Tovey and Humoud Al-Shayji. Oscar Campbell and Peter Kennerley are both external adjudicators with voting rights. Claims should be sent to the secretary at alsirhan@alsirhan.com or the chair at mikeinq8@gmail.com.

OMAN

The Oman Bird Records Committee comprises Jens Eriksen (recorder), Ian Harrison, Dave Sargeant, Graham Searle, John Atkins, Peter Cowan, Waheed Al Fazari, Zahran Al Abdulasalam and Manal Al Kindi. Claims should be sent to Jens Eriksen hjoman@gmail.com from whom claim forms can be obtained. OBRC has accepted the following records since the report in *Sandgrouse* 38(1).

Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica*. Up to ten Saham sewage treatment plant

Plate 7. Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* 2 January 2016 Saham, Oman. © *Hanne & Jens Eriksen*

Plate 8. Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* 1 March 2016, Haitham, Oman. © *Hanne & Jens Eriksen*

Plate 9. Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* 1 March 2016, Haitham, Oman. © *Hanne & Jens Eriksen*

STP, 2 January–25 February 2016 (H & J Eriksen, JD Atkins, Plate 7). Ninth record.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris* (*diomedea*) *borealis*. One off Muscat, 21 June 2014 (F Güpner & J Röw). Second record.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*. Adult male Haitham, 1 March 2016 (H & J Eriksen, Plates 8, 9). Seventh record.

Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor*. Up to seven Khawr Rawri, 28 December 2015–14

Plate 10. Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* Khawr Rawri, Oman, 12 January 2016. © *Hanne & Jens Eriksen*

January 2016 (R Tovey, H & J Eriksen, Plate 10). Seventh record.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*. Adult Wadi Darbat, 20 November 2015 (G Sahlstrand). First record.

Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*. Juvenile Raysut, 27 January–1 March 2016 (D Forsman *et al*, Plate 11). Fifth record.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*. One Raysut waste disposal site, 20 November 2015 (L Dahlgren & R Tovey). Sixth record.

Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*. Adult female Khawr Rawri, 2–3 November 2015 (W Faveyts & M Watson). Eighth record.

Common Hawk-Cuckoo *Hierococcyx varius*. One Al Balid farm, 7 January 2016 (R Tovey). Third record.

Pale Martin *Riparia diluta*. One Raysut STP, 11 December 2015 (H & J Eriksen, Plate 12). Fifth record.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*. Two Hilf, Masirah, 19 November–4 December 2015 (B De Schutter & R Tovey), two Raysut STP, 26 November–11 December 2015 (B De Schutter and H & J Eriksen). Ninth and tenth records.

Plate 11. Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* 19 February 2016 Raysut, Oman. © *Hanne & Jens Eriksen*

Plate 12. Pale Martin *Riparia diluta* 11 December 2015 Raysut, Oman. © *Hanne & Jens Eriksen*

European Robin *Erithacus rubecola*. One Muntasar, 8 November 2015 (M Arinder & A Ekstrand) Sixth record.

Caspian Stonechat *Saxicola (torquatus) maurus hemprichii*. Adult male Jarziz farm, Salalah, 3 December 2015 (O J Campbell *et al*). Ninth record.

Pied Bush Chat *Saxicola caprata*. Male Barka, 25 October 2015 (W Faveyts). Eighth record.

Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*. One Ayn Tobroq, 4–13 January 2016 (C Lazaro and H & J Eriksen). Eighth record.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*. One Sun farms, Sohar, 11 December 2015 (JD Atkins & A Garrido). First record.

Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus*. One Dawkah farm, 14 November 2015 (S Holmsted). Ninth record.

QATAR

Qatar Bird Records Committee members are: Jamie A Buchan (recorder), Neil G Morris (secretary), Richard F Porter (hon president), Keith Betton and Simon J Tull. Claims should be sent to jamie_buchan@yahoo.com.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The Emirates Bird Records Committee EBRC comprises Oscar Campbell (chairman), Mark Smiles (secretary), Simon Lloyd, Huw Roberts and Neil Tovey (voting members) plus Tommy Pedersen (UAE bird recorder), Ahmed al Ali, Peter Hellyer and Jacky Judas (non-voting members). Records are circulated and assessments published three times/year, as according to the timetable outlined at www.uaebirding.com/ebrc.html. Decisions on assessments, plus the EBRC's constitution and information about the assessment process and downloadable report forms are all available at the same location. The UAE Bird Checklist, in both short and annotated forms, is available at www.uaebirding.com/uaechecklist.html, along with recently published annual reports for 2010–2014. Claims, preferably on report forms downloadable at www.uaebirding.com/ebrc.html, should be sent to ebrcuae@gmail.com or to Tommy Pedersen (tommypepe63@gmail.com). EBRC has accepted the following records since the report in *Sandgrouse* 38(1).

Plate 13. Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* 28 November 2015, Al Wathba wetland reserve, United Arab Emirates. © *Oscar Campbell*

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*. One female Al Wathba wetland reserve 28 November–21 December 2015 (OJ Campbell, S Bashir Khan *et al*, Plate 13). 17th record.

Swinhoe's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*. One Khor Kalba pelagic 9 October 2015 (SP Lloyd *et al*). Sixth record. Following a recent review, several previously accepted records of this species have been reassigned as unidentified dark-rumped petrel sp and are no longer included in the totals for this species.

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*. Two juveniles Ajman water treatment plant 12 December 2015 (A Al Ali) with one re-found Ra's al-Khor 26 December 2015–13 March 2016 (PS Nistar, M Luqman, B Al Qasimi *et al*). The second bird recorded Khor Badiaa, Oman (277 km southeast) 31 December onwards. Eighth record and first since 2003.

Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*. One Mafraq rubbish tip 21 November 2015–6 February 2016 (OJ Campbell *et al*) and another (possibly same, sites 110 km apart) Zakher lake 9 February–5 March 2016 (OJ Campbell *et al*). Seventh and eighth records.

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*. One Saih al Salam (Al Qudra lake) 29 October–6 November 2015 (J Johnston *et al*). Third record.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*. One first-winter Fujairah port beach 15–21 November 2015 (R Walker, D Jackson, A Pavlushkin). 16th record, third since September 2008.

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*. One first winter Abu Dhabi Golf and Equestrian Club 7–11 January 2016 (OJ Campbell, J Gaskell) and another first winter Mafraq waste disposal site 9 January–5 March 2016 (OJ Campbell *et al*). 14th and 15th records, first '1st winters' since 2008.

Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus*. One female or immature Green Mubazzarah 27 November 2015 (V Sharma) and one adult male Al Warsan lakes 6 February 2016 (M Smiles). 18th & 19th records.

Pacific Swift (*sensu lato*) *Apus pacificus* sp. One Yas island 2 January 2016 (A Dwarshuis, M van Waasdijk, M Barth, OJ Campbell). Fourth record.

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*. One Wamm farms 13 November 2015 (OJ Campbell, SP Lloyd *et al*). 21st record.

Black Drongo *Edolius macrocercus*. One Zabeel park 10 December 2015 (M Daubney) with two birds 17 February 2016 (L Kihl, C Schulze, M Suanjak). Eighth record but possibly relating to bird(s) irregularly reported greater Dubai area since 2012.

Ashy Drongo *Edolius leucophaeus*. One Al Mamzar park 31 October–28 November 2015 (M Smiles). 10th record; now virtually annual since first record 2006.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus*. One Wamm farms 31 October 2015 (M Barth). Fourth record, previous record 2011.

White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*. One Jebel Hafit 29 October 2015 (S Böhner). 13th record, previous record 2002.

Caspian Stonechat *Saxicola* (*torquatus*) *maurus hemprichii*. One Wamm farms 7–27 November 2015–18 February 2016 (OJ Campbell, G Sanders, R Miller, A Robertson *et al*). 23rd record, but only second in autumn and first to over winter.

Pied Bush Chat *Saxicola caprata*. One female Wamm farms 7 November 2015 (OJ Campbell, G Sanders, R Miller, A Robertson). 17th record.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following assisted in the compilation of this review: Jane Stylianou (Cyprus), Avner Cohen, Yoav Perlman (Israel), Fares Khoury (Jordan), Jens Eriksen (Oman), Oscar Campbell, Tommy Pedersen (United Arab Emirates).

Ian Harrison, Llyswen Farm, Lôn y Felin, Aberaeron, SA46 0ED, UK. ianbirds@gmail.com

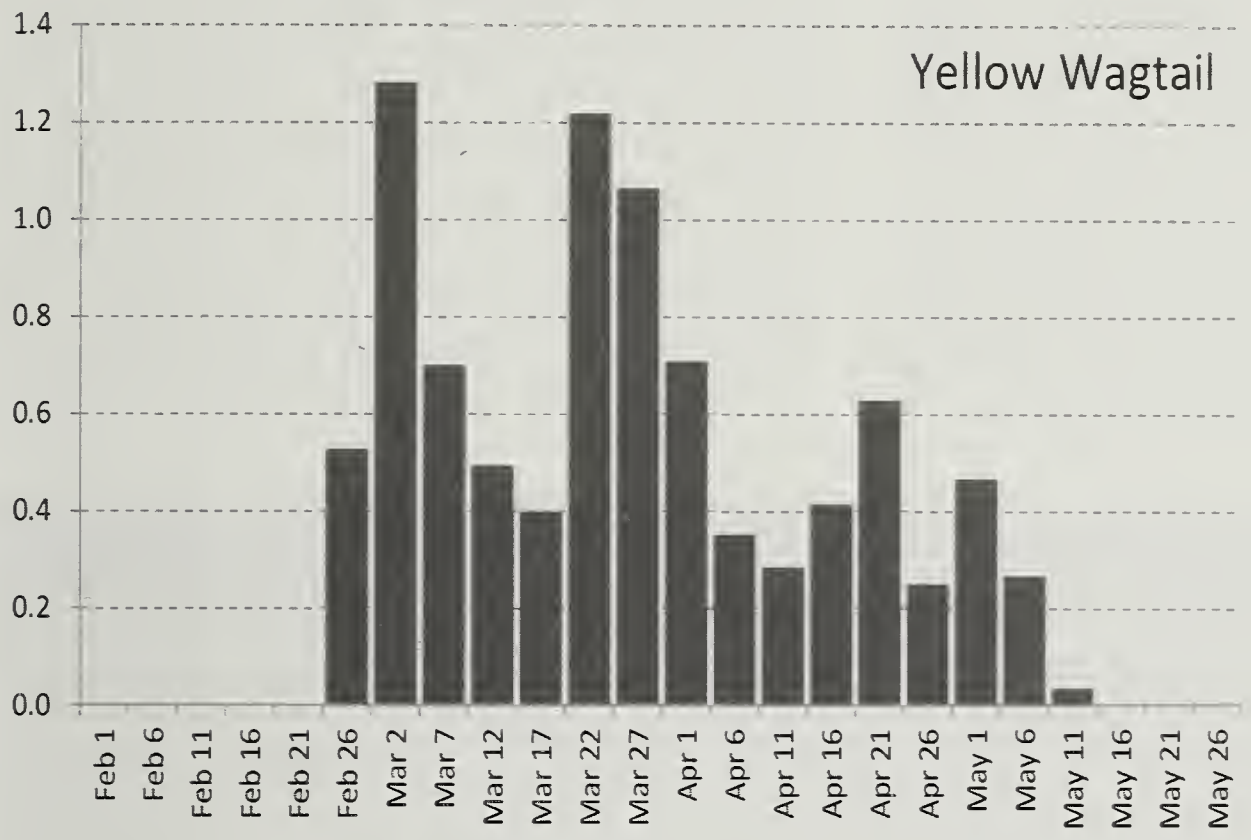
Corrigenda

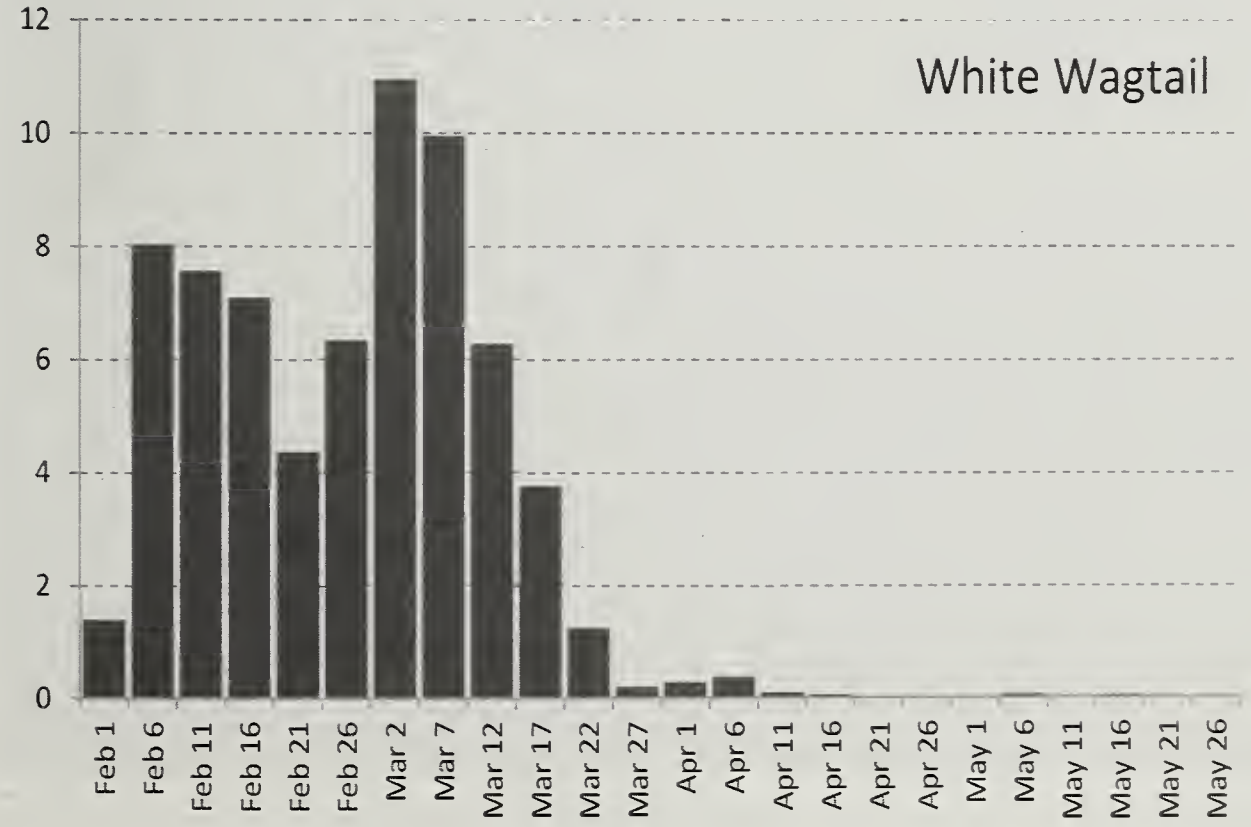
Flood, RL. 2016. Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis*, Persian Shearwater *Puffinus persicus*, Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax* and Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*, Muscat to Djibouti and into the Red sea, March/April 2015. *Sandgrouse* 38(1): 27–35.

The coordinates given for the Cory's Shearwater record (p28) should be 15° 4' N, 41° 42' E.

Campbell, O & N Moran. 2016. Phenology of spring landbird migration through Abu Dhabi island, United Arab Emirates, 2007–2014. *Sandgrouse* 38(1): 38–70.

The authors inadvertently omitted some data when constructing Figures 36 (Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*) and 37 (White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*) (p62). The corrected figures are presented below. Discussion within the systematic list for these two species (pp64–65) is unaffected and compatible with the corrected figures.





Around the Region

Ian Harrison (compiler)

Records in *Around the Region* are published for interest only; their inclusion does not imply acceptance by the records committee of the relevant country. All records refer to 2016 unless stated otherwise.

Records and photographs for *Sandgrouse* 39(1) should be sent by 15 December 2016 to ianbirds@gmail.com or atr@osme.org.

ARMENIA

A **Desert Finch** *Rhodospiza obsoleta* Vedi hills 5 May (a known location for this species, first record June 2012).

AZERBAIJAN

The following records all refer to January 2015. 200 **Greater White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons,* nine **Lesser White-fronted Geese** *A. erythropus* and 500 **Eastern Greylag Geese** *A. a. rubrirostris* Shirvan national park 16 Jan. 340 **Gadwalls** *Anas strepera* also present. 300 **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* Gizil-Agach 18 Jan and over 50 **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* Mahmutchala lake 17 Jan. 16 000 **Tufted Ducks** *Aythya fuligula* Baku 28 Jan. A **Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus* near Quba 25 Jan and three Xınalıq 26 Jan with 12 **Eurasian Griffon Vultures** *Gyps fulvus.* 42 **Cinereous Vultures** *Aegypius monachus* Besh Barmag 25 Jan. 205 **Western Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* and 40 **Hen Harriers** *C.* (*cyaneus*) *cyaneus* Shirvan NP 16 Jan. 205 **White-tailed Eagles** *Haliaeetus albicilla* Besh Barmag 24 Jan. 40 000 **Little Bustards** *Tetrax tetrax* Shirvan NP 16 Jan, 2600 near Biləsuvar 19 Jan and 5000 near Ağgöl NP 20 Jan. 1300 **Pied Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* Gizil-Agach 18 Jan. On 25 Jan Besh Barmag 40 000 **Common Gulls** *Larus* (*c.*) *canus,* the second record of **Glaucous Gull** *L. hyperboreus* and first record **European Herring Gull** *L.*

Plate 1. Black-winged Pratincoles *Glareola nordmanni* 17 April 2016, Besh Barmag, Azerbaijan. © *Andreas Sandberg*

Plate 2. White-headed Wagtail *Motacilla (flava) leucocephala* 17 April 2016, Besh Barmag, Azerbaijan. © *Andreas Sandberg*

argentatus (both singles), plus 60 000 **Caspian Gulls** *L. cachinnans*. 10 000 Western **Jackdaws** *Coloeus monedula* and 20 000 **Rooks** *Corvus frugilegus* Shirvan NP 16 Jan. Five **Moustached Warblers** *Acrocephalus melanopogon* Gizil-Agach 18 Jan and four near Ağgöl NP 20 Jan. A **Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus (rubescens) japonicus* Shirvan NP 16 Jan, first mid winter record. Two **Wallcreepers** *Tichodroma muraria* Xınalıq 26 Jan. 34 **Hawfinches** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* near Ağgöl NP 20 Jan and 40 on steppe near Acinohur lake 22 Jan.

The following records refer to 2016. 13 **Pallid Harriers** *Circus macrourus*, 36 **Montagu's Harriers** *C. pygargus* Besh Barmag 17 Apr. Two **White-tailed Lapwings** *Vanellus leucurus* Kizil Agach 8 May (outside its range this late in spring). 2915 **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* Besh Barmag 17 Apr (Plate 1). An adult **Great Black-headed Gull** *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus* Kizil Agach 8 May (injured wing but outside its range this late in spring). A pair of '**Northern Shikras**' *Accipiter (badius) cenchroides* at breeding site Masalli 8 May. **Red-tailed Wheatears** *Oenanthe chrysopygia* near Batabat (Nakhchivan AR, at several sites in dry semi-desert) 12 May. One **Radde's Accentor** *Prunella ocularis* Batabat, 12 May (little known from this region). One **'White-headed Wagtail'** *Motacilla (flava) leucocephala* Besh Barmag 17 Apr (Plate 2). Three **Mongolian Finches** *Bucanetes mongolicus* Negram 12 May. **Grey-necked Buntings** *Emberiza buchanani* noted several sites in dry semi-desert near Batabat 12 May.

CYPRUS

35 **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* flew into Larnaca sewage works pools 26 Jan with ten remaining to 23 Feb, four to 2 Mar and one still present into June; 15 Kapouti reservoir 6 Jan. A pair **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* Mia Milia 14 Apr, female sitting on active nest; pair seen again 21 Apr but subsequent visits indicated probable failure. Max 300 **Common Pochards** *Aythya ferina* Mia Milia 6 Jan. 23 **Ferruginous Ducks** *A. nyroca* Mia Milia 23 Jan and six there 12 May and 5 Jun, assumed to be nesting as were the birds at Ayios Loukas wetland (female with seven ducklings seen). Two **Tufted Ducks** *A. fuligula* Athalassa dam, Nicosia, 2–30 Jan and a female Kapouti reservoir 21 Mar. The three female **White-headed Ducks** *Oxyura leucocephala* first recorded Oroklini marsh 14 Dec 2015 remained to 26 Feb with one present to 5 Mar. Two **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* Asprokremmos dam 8–18 Feb. Large numbers **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus roseus* counted 16 Jan waterbird count (14 000 Larnaca salt lake area, including a melanistic individual first seen March 2015, *c*2500 Akrotiri salt lake). Single **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* 6 Apr over Timi, Paphos, and 21 Apr over Lady's Mile, Limassol. Two **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* Agia Eirini dam 27 Jan and one over Zakaki marsh, Limassol, 28 Jan. 7+ **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* nests, 39 **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* nests, *c*300 **Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus (i.) ibis* nests and 5+ **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* nests counted Ayios Loukas wetland 4 Jun. A French-ringed **Western Osprey** *Pandion (h.) haliaetus* Klepini reservoir 2 May. A **Booted Eagle** *Aquila pennata* cape Greco 9 Apr. Single **Corncrakes** *Crex crex* Ronnas bay 8 Apr and Akrotiri gravel pits 18 Apr. A **Baillon's Crake** *Zapornia (p.) pusilla* Phasouri reedbeds 20 Apr and another Germasogeia dam 29 Apr. 23 **Demoiselle Cranes** *Grus virgo* Kapouti reservoir 18 Mar. 600 **Common Cranes** *G. grus* East Mesaoria plain 5 Mar and 350 Kouklia village 8 Mar.

Four **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus (o.) ostralegus* Akrotiri coast 31 Mar, four Lady's Mile, Limassol, 13 Apr and two Meneou beach, Larnaca, 29 Apr. Only one record **Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* this spring, single Mandria, Paphos, 17 Mar. A

Greater Sand Plover *Anarhyncus leschenaultii* Akanthou 9 Apr. Single **Great Snipes** *Gallinago media* Evretou dam 14 Apr, Phasouri reedbeds 18–22 Apr, Lady's Mile 21 Apr, Akhna dam 7 May and two Akhna dam 10 May. The long staying **Whimbrel** *Numenius* (*p.*) *phaeopus* remained at Paphos headland to 12 Apr with other records of this scarce passage migrant Akrotiri gravel pits 8 Apr (two), one Mandria, Paphos, 17–22 Apr and 11 May and one Larnaca airport coast 14 May. Single **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres* Klapsides headland 6 Feb and Paphos headland 15 Apr. A **Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* Spiros pool 10 Apr with two **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* present 19 Apr and two Akrotiri salt lake area 10–14 May. Single **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* Larnaca airport pools 25–29 Apr, Akrotiri salt lake 28 Apr and Akrotiri gravel pits 13 May. 35 **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* Kouklia reservoir 26 Apr and a **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* Spiros pool, Larnaca, 19 Apr. Two **Slender-billed Gulls** *Chroicocephalus genei* Ayios Loukas wetland 4 Jun and a **Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus* Larnaca salt lake 16 Jan–9 Feb. Breeding **Audouin's Gulls** *Ichthyaetus audouinii* on Kleides islands 7 May (four nests) and 28 May (six nests). An adult **Great Black-headed Gull** *I. ichthyaetus* Larnaca sewage works area 3–4 Feb, breeding plumage birds Lady's Mile 15 Mar, Oroklini marsh 28 Mar and Spiros pool 10 Apr. A first winter **Common Gull** *Larus* (*c.*) *canus* Fresh Water lake (south), Famagusta, 26 Jan and others Lady's Mile 28 Jan and 3 Mar, Larnaca sewage works 5 Feb, Neapolis wetland 6 Feb. Five **Caspian Terns** *Hydroprogne caspia* Mandria, Paphos, three Oroklini marsh 28 Mar, three Akrotiri gravel pits 21 Apr and seven Mandria 13 Apr (largest group recorded Cyprus). The largest group of **Little Terns** *Sternula albifrons* for Cyprus (41) Larnaca sewage works 14 May while largest recorded group of **Black Terns** *Chilidonias niger* (eight) there 9 May. Singles Larnaca sewage works 14 May–14 Jun and Akhna dam 24 May. Two dark phase **Arctic Skuas** *Stercorarius parasiticus* flew west off cape Pyla 12 Feb with a pale phase flying north at Paphos headland 24 Apr.

A **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Syrrhaptes orientalis* Livera 28 Jan. **Laughing Doves** *Spilopelia senegalensis* continue to colonise with more than 20 Aradippou, Larnaca, 20 May and new breeding locations in villages east of Paphos. A female **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* Mandria 21 Feb–27 Apr fourth record (if wild origin) (Plate 3). A **White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* Phasouri reedbeds 13–27 Jan and a **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* Lady's Mile/Zakaki marsh 1 Feb–1 Mar. Small numbers of **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** *Merops persicus* recorded several locations 5 Apr–7 May, max three Phasouri reedbeds 12 Apr. Very early **Eurasian Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* Agios Ermolaos 11 Jan and Strakka, Nicosia, 19 Jan. First record **Amur Falcon** *Falco* (*vespertinus*) *amurensis* (a male) Anarita park area, Paphos, 28 Apr–15

Plate 3. Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* 22 March 2016, Mandria, Paphos, Cyprus. © *Matt Smith*

Plate 4. Amur Falcon *Falco* (*vespertinus*) *amurensis* 28 April 2016, Anarita park, Paphos, Cyprus. © *Matt Smith*

May (Plate 4) while one **Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug* over Xylofagou, Larnaca, 15 Mar. A **Daurian Shrike** *Lanius* (*i.*) *isabellinus* at Akrotiri gravel pits 26 Mar and one **Turkestan Shrike** *L.* (*i.*) *phoenicuroides* Mandria 8–9 Apr (Plate 5). A **Grey Shrike** *L.* (*excubitor*) probably *elegans* Akrotiri salt lake 31 Mar. First record **Brown-necked Raven** *Corvus ruficollis* cape Greco 24–25 Mar (Plate 6). Two **Northern Ravens** *C.* (*corax*) *corax* (almost extinct Cyprus) Lythrodontas, Nicosia, 5 Jan, one Athalassa dam, Nicosia, 25 Jan, five Trachoni pools 28 Jan and six Rizokarpaso 10 Apr. A **Bimaculated Lark** *Melanocorypha bimaculata* Karpasia peninsula 24 Mar and five 2 Apr, while singles Akrotiri gravel pits 6 Apr, cape Apostolos Andreas 14 Apr (Plate 7) and Petounta point, Larnaca, 16 Apr. Fourth record **Bar-tailed Lark** *Ammomanes cinctura* Akrotiri gravel pits 2–3 Apr. Four **Lesser Short-toed Larks** *Alaudala* (*r.*) *rufescens* Spiros pool 7 Feb and five Mandria 11 Mar. Seven **Eurasian Crag Martins** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Plate 5. Turkestan Shrike *Lanius* (*isabellinus*) *phoenicuroides* 9 April 2016, Mandria, Paphos, Cyprus. © *Dave Walker*

Plate 6. Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis* 24 March 2016, cape Greco, Famagusta, Cyprus. © *Raija Howard*

Plate 7. Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata* 14 April 2016, Rizokarpaso, Cyprus. © *Hüseyin Yorgancı*

Plate 8. Eurasian Crag-Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* 26 January 2016, Kapouti reservoir, Cyprus. © *Birtan Gökeri*

Plate 9. Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus* (*bonelli*) *orientalis* 6 April 2016, Livera, Cyprus. © *Birtan Gökeri*

Kapouti reservoir 26–27 Jan (Plate 8) and six Rizokarpaso 10 Apr (rare visitor).

Eastern Bonelli's Warblers *Phylloscopus* (*bonelli*) *orientalis* Rizokarpaso 26 Mar and Livera 6 Apr (Plate 9) while a possible **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* Paphos headland 18 Mar. One **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivatorum* Tsada 24 May and **Icterine Warblers** *H. icterina* Rizokarpaso 7 May and Filani 9 May. Single **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* Akrotiri gravel pits 19 & 23 Apr and two ringed Neo Horio, Paphos, 20 Apr and three 23 Apr. An **Asian Desert Warbler** *S.* [*n.*] *nana* Anarita park 26–30 Mar (seventeenth record). Last report of **Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria* from Avakas gorge, Paphos, was 10 Apr while one Kensington cliffs, Limassol, 13 Jan. An unseasonal adult **Rose-coloured Starling** *Pastor roseus* Paphos headland 20 Feb & 2 Mar with singles Rizokarpaso 7 May, Livera 11 May and cape Apostolos Andreas 21 May (a rare migrant). One **Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus* Rizokarpaso 4 Mar (a rare visitor) and a **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia*

Plate 10. Western Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola (torquatus) maurus* 2 April 2016, Livera, Cyprus. © *Ertaç Cüneyt*

Plate 11. Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha* 10 April 2016, Timi beach, Paphos, Cyprus. © *Dave Walker*

Plate 12. White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* 24 February 2016, Cape Greco, Famagusta, Cyprus. © *Matt Smith*

Plate 13. Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* 20 February 2016, Trikomo, Cyprus. © *Hüseyin Yorgancı*

luscinia Livera 19 Apr. Eight reports of **Semi-collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula semitorquata* 21 Mar–13 Apr at cape Greco, Souni, Akhna dam, Kiti and Tala. **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus p. samamisicus* males Mesogi, Paphos, 21 Mar and cape Greco 25–30 Mar. Male **Western Siberian Stonechats** *Saxicola (torquatus) maurus* cape Greco 4 and 12 Mar, Livera 2 Apr (Plate 10) and Karpasia peninsula 2 Apr, with a female there 26 Mar. One male **Hooded Wheatear** *Oenanthe monacha* Timi beach, Paphos, 10–13 Apr (Plate 11) with another Baths of Aphrodite, Latchi, 13 Apr. An overwintering **Cyprus Wheatear** *Oenanthe cypriaca* Kalopanagiotis, Troodos, 5–9 Jan. **White-crowned Wheatears** *Oenanthe leucopyga* at cape Greco 23–26 Feb (Plate 12) and 7 May (eighth & ninth records).

A single **Rock Sparrow** *Petronia petronia* cape Greco 30 Jan–15 Feb. Single **Dunnocks** *Prunella modularis* Anarita park 16 Jan, Tsada 9 Feb and Paphos headland 20 Mar. A **White-headed Wagtail** *Motacilla (flava) leucocephala* Paphos headland 13 Apr and one **Yellow-**

Plate 14. Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* 30 January 2016, cape Greco, Famagusta, Cyprus. © *Raija Howard*

Plate 15. Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus* 21 February 2016, Kapouti, Cyprus. © *Birtan Gökeri*

Plate 16. Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus* 16 March 2016, Kioneli, Cyprus. © *Robin Snape*

headed Wagtail *M. (f.) lutea* Lady's Mile 22 Apr (both sspp rare visitors). **Citrine Wagtails** *M. citreola,* although reported from various locations 18 Mar–16 May, were in fewer numbers than previous years. A **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* Paphos headland 8 Mar–5 Apr and two Akrotiri gravel pits 6 Apr. **Bramblings** *Fringilla montifringilla* Trikomo 20 Feb (Plate 13) and cape Greco 13 Mar while only record of **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* was one ringed Polis reedbeds 24 Jan. Up to four **Trumpeter Finches** *Bucanetes githagineus* cape Greco 30 Jan–19 Mar (Plate 14) and one Salamis 27 Feb and two Dhekelia garrison 18 Mar. Reports of **Eurasian Siskin** *Spinus spinus* from various locations this winter (Plates 15, 16) but only one **Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citronella* (Asgata, Limassol, 15 Jan). Over 100 **Cretzschmar's Buntings** *E. caesia* Livera 19 Mar.

IRAN

Most of the following records are from Hormozgan province. 13–17 **Crested Honey Buzzards** *Pernis ptilorhyncus* mainly Bandar Abbas–Minab area 19–27 Jan. 570 **Crab-plovers** *Dromas ardeola* and 18 **Great Stone-curlews** *Esacus recurvirostris* Tiab creek 20 Jan. 71 **Great Knots** *Calidris tenuirostris* Golshar coast 26 Jan. 26 **Sooty Gulls** *Larus hemprichii* Jask 24 Jan and 15 **Great Black-headed Gulls** *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus* Azini creek 22 Jan and 20 Jask Mąrkazi protected area 24 Jan. Two **Common Woodpigeons** *Columba palumbus* south Kashan 10 Mar were the first for the area. Two **Spotted Owlets** *Athene brama* Gonewordi 23 Jan. A female **Sind Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos assimilis* near Gonari 21 Jan, two Gonewordi 23 Jan and two Bahmani 25 Jan. Second record **Ashy Drongo** *Edolius leucophaeus* Jahad park 19–26 Jan (Plate 17). **Sand Lark** *Alaudala raytal,* common along coast Bandar Abbas–Azini creek 19–26

17

18

Plate 17. Ashy Drongo *Edolius leucophaeus* 19 January 2016, Jahad park, Iran. © *Magnus Ullman*

Plate 18. Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* 21 January 2016, Del Goraz, Iran. © *Magnus Ullman*

Jan (at least 50 birds recorded). Second record **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus* (*proregulus*) *proregulus* northeast Tehran 4 Apr. Two **Hume's Leaf Warblers** *P. humei* Jahad park 19 & 26 Jan and two Bahmani 25 Jan. Two **Oriental White-eyes** *Zosterops palpebrosus* Azini creek 22 Jan. Four **Song Thrushes** *Turdus philomelos* Bahmani 25 Jan. Two **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula* (*p.*) *parva* Jahad park 19 Jan, four Bahmani 25 Jan, three Jahad park 26 Jan. Two **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus richardi* Del Goraz 21–23 Jan (Plate 18) and a **Meadow Pipit** *A. pratensis* there 21 Jan. Two pairs **Olive-backed Pipits** *A. hodgsoni* Bahmani 25 Jan, two Jahad park 26 Jan (third and fourth records). Ten **Eurasian Siskins** *Spinus spinus* Jahad park 19 Jan (fourth record southern Iran).

IRAQ

200 **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* Dalmaj marshes 2 Apr and ten 15 Apr Central marshes, southern Iraq. 60 **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* Dalmaj marshes 2 Apr and 40 **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* there 5 Apr. One **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* western part Central marshes 15 Apr. 80 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* Dalmaj 27 Apr and eight **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* there that day with five Central marshes 10 May. An **Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* Khor Khafka 29 Jun 2014 (few Iraq records). 300 **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** *Pterocles alchata* Dalmaj marshes 5 Apr. A flock of 3000 **Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia* Central marshes 10 May. 50 **Basra Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus griseldis* Dalmaj marshes 5 Apr and 20 counted during a survey Central marshes 10 May. Three pairs of breeding **Desert Finches** *Rhodospiza obsoleta* 15–16 May Khanzad, northeast of Erbil.

ISRAEL

The first breeding record of **Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna* near Nizzana, a pair with nine ducklings first noted 21 Jun. Second record **Red-billed Teal** *Anas erythrorhyncha* first found north Arava, 30–31 Jan 2015 remained there to at least 7 May 2016. Two **Red-breasted Mergansers** *Mergus serrator* Bnei Israel reservoir, Golan, 12 Jan–27 Feb. Sixth record **Swinhoe's Storm Petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* off Eilat, 8 May. Two **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon aethereus* off North Beach, Eilat, 20 May. A **Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis* Bet Shean valley 5–7 Mar. Second record **European Shag** *Gulosus aristotelis* off Jaffa 18 Jan. A **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* north of Eilat throughout March. One **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotos* Eilat mountains 31 Mar. Long-staying immature **Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* south Judean plains until at least 31 Mar while another migrated north over Eilat mountains 9 May. One **Rough-**

legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* near Kiryat Gat 3 Feb–31Mar while a second long-stayer 10 km north, near Kedma, 17 Feb (fourth & fifth records). Fifth record of **Crab Plover** North Beach, Eilat, 7 May while a **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* at Uvda 26 Mar. Single **Great Snipes** *Gallinago media* Kfar Etzyon 11 Apr, Hamadiya, Jordan valley, 15–16 Apr and Hama'apil fishponds, Hefer valley, 19 Apr. **White-eyed Gull** *Ichthyaetus leucophthalmus* is very rare in the Mediterranean but one off Tel Aviv 25 Jan. **White-cheeked Tern** *Sterna repressa*: a single pair bred Eilat and hatched one chick. Single **Arctic Terns** *Sterna paradisaea* North Beach, Eilat 5 & 12 May. Five **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus* off North Beach, Eilat, 27 Mar, nine 12 Apr and one 23 Apr. A **Rufous Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia* (*orientalis*) *meena* Einot Gibton, coastal plains, 6 May was 13th record and first for May. Breeding of **Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* confirmed in northern Dead sea region where a pair was seen throughout June with a recently fledged juvenile 24 Jun.

One **Steppe Grey Shrike** *Lanius* (*meridionalis*) *pallidirostris* Uvda valley 16 Jan and one Km76, Arava, all Jan. Several breeding pairs **Thick-billed Lark** *Ramphocoris clotbey* southern Arava April/May. During March several mobile groups and single **Dunn's Larks** *Eremalauda dunni* south Negev and Eilat mountains where recently fledged juvenile seen 16 Apr. A few **Oriental Skylarks** *Alauda gulgula* southern Arava, March. **A Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* Oranit, east Dan region, 26–28 Feb and one **Hume's Leaf Warbler** *P. humei* Dafna, Hula valley, 5–6 Feb. One, 11th record, **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* ringed Eilat 8 May. An **Asian Desert Warbler** *Sylvia* (*n.*) *nana* Tel Aviv 25 Apr was a very late record and only the third one for the coastal plains. A pair of **Black Scrub Robins** *Cercotrichas podobe* bred March/April Hai Bar Yotvata nature reserve (first record 2015) and several more individuals in southern Arava. An influx of **Collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula albicollis* mid April mainly southern and central areas: 56 Neot Smadar 12 Apr, 50 Yeruham 15 Apr and 30 Tel Aviv 13 Apr. Single **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *F.* (*p.*) *parva* Jerusalem 16–26 Feb, Lotan 22 Apr and Km82, Arava, 23 Apr. Seventh record **Basalt Wheatear** *Oenanthe* (*lugens*) *warriae*, a first-winter bird, Km95 Arava 12 Jan–16 Feb. One male **Kurdistan Wheatear** *O.* (*x.*) *xanthoprymna* near Lotan, Arava, 23 Jan–29 Feb and another Tsvia, Gilboa, throughout Jan/Feb. Third bird at Majdal Shams, mount Hermon, 18 Mar. Third record **Masked Wagtail** *Motacilla* (*alba*) *personata* southern Dead sea region 23–25 March. Sixth record **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* near Arsuf, north of Tel Aviv, 19 Mar.

OMAN

Five–ten **Lesser Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna javanica* Saham sewage lagoons 2 Jan–28 Feb (ninth record). **Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons* Khawr Rawri Nov/Dec 2015 last seen 23 Feb while three Khawr Taqah 10 Apr. Five **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* Raysut lagoons 19 Feb, eight **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* also there. A single **Swinhoe's Storm Petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* off Mirbat 26 Feb (Plate 19). Five **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconaias minor* Khawr Rawri 12–13 Jan and three 23 Feb presumably some of the birds first seen December 2015. At least 20 **Yellow Bitterns** *Ixobrychus sinensis* East Khawr 3 May (74 sightings in two hours) and one in north at Seeb, 12 May (very rare in north, although one 22 Oct 2015 Al Qurm park, Muscat). Two **Eastern Cattle Egrets** *Bubulcus* (*ibis*) *coromandus* Salalah area 13 Apr–18 May. Sixth record **Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* Khawr Razat 9 Jan. One **Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Khawr Badiaa, Musannah, 8 Jan seen again Azaibah 9 Feb. Seventh record **Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel*, an adult male, Haitham 1 Mar. One **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* Seeb, 14–15 Apr, 12 May. Two **Crested Honey Buzzards** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* East Khawr park 21 Feb. A **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Clanga pomarina* Raysut sewage treatment plant 9 Feb while one **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* at nearby Raysut lagoons 19 Feb (possibly the 20 Nov 2015 bird). Fifth record **Pallas's Fish Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*, a juvenile, Raysut area 27 Jan–1 Mar. Over 20 **Montagu's Harriers** *Circus pygargus* Jarziz farm, Salalah, 30 Jan was an unusual concentration. A **White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus* Khawr Rawri 23 Feb and three Raysut STP 16 Mar. 14 **Spotted Thick-knees** *Burhinus capensis* Al Baleed park 20 Feb, an unusual

Plate 19. Swinhoe's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* 26 February 2016, off Mirbat, Oman. © *Hanne & Jens Eriksen*

concentration. **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* records Raysut STP 9 Feb, 19 Feb and 18 May probably refer to same bird, possibly the same bird recorded there late 2015. 14 **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* on farms near Barka 8 Jan while a single Dawkah farm 5 Feb. The **Asian Dowitcher** *Limnodromus semipalmatus* first seen 3 Nov 2015 Al Ansab wetland, Muscat, remained there to 11 Feb. One **Common Gull** *Larus (c.) canus* Raysut 19 Feb.

A **Rufous Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia (orientalis) meena* Raysut 7 Feb and 15 **African Collared Doves** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* 16–17 Feb Al Mazyunah. A **Tambourine Dove** *Turtur tympanistria* Sahanawt 11 Apr (unknown origin). Third record **Common Hawk-Cuckoo** *Hierococcyx varius* Al Balid Farm 7 Jan while 13 **Alpine Swifts** *Tachymarptis melba* over Sahanawt farm 26 Feb. Two **Malachite Kingfishers** *Corythornis cristatus* Khawr Rawri late 2015 still present 10 Mar. **Amur Falcons** *Falco (vespertinus) amurensis* Sahanawt farm 25 Apr and Jarziz farm 16 May while fifth record of **Merlin** *F. columbarius* Sahanawt farm 26 Feb. Two **Lanner Falcons** *F. biarmicus* Mudayy oasis, 1 Apr. **Grey Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* recorded Mudhay 15 Jan (ten), 18 Feb (eight) Al Beed farms 18 Mar (one). A **White-eared Bulbul** *Pycnonotus (leucogenys) leucotis* East Khawr 20 May (first record south Oman). One **Pale Martin** *Riparia diluta* Raysut STP 7 Feb (sixth record). Single **Red-rumped Swallows** *Cecropis daurica* at farms near Barka 8 Jan, Al Beed farms 18 Mar (two 24 Mar) and Qitbit 18 Mar. A **Streak-throated Swallow** *Petrochelidon fluvicola* Raysut STP 7 Feb (seventh record). A **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* and one **Moustached Warbler** *Acrocephalus melanopogon* (ninth record) Qatbit 14 Jan. Four **Wattled Starlings** *Creatophora cinerea* Sahanawt farm 3 May and six **Yellow-throated Sparrows** *Gymnoris xanthocollis* there 23 Feb. The **Forest Wagtail** *Dendronanthus indicus* at East Khawr park first reported 21 Nov 2015 last seen 29 Feb. Single **Olive-backed Pipits** *Anthus hodgsoni* Al Beed farms (18 Mar) and Qatbit 18–26 Mar. A **Cretzschmar's Bunting** *Emberiza caesia* Mudhay 19 Feb (fifth record) and **Black-headed Buntings** *E. melanocephala* Al Beed farm 18 & 24 Mar.

SAUDI ARABIA

A minimum of three calling **Harlequin Quails** *Coturnix delegorguei* were heard and seen near Sabya 2 Jun. A **Striated Heron** *Butorides striata* at Dammam corniche 12 Feb was fourth record for Eastern province while a **Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* at KAUST, north of Jeddah, 16 Jan–14 May was a first for the area and well north of its normal range. The second **Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* for Saudi Arabia was at KAUST 14 May. A **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* was near Tabuk 25 Mar. A wintering **Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* remained at Rabigh dam to 29 Jan and at least fifteen **Greater Spotted Eagles** *Aquila clanga* wintered Sabkhat Al Fasl until Mar. One **Booted Eagle** *Aquila pennata* SAF 8 Jan (vagrant Eastern province) and another 10 Jan Tabuk (rare winter visitor). Second **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* for KAUST 22 Apr. 425 **Northern Lapwings** *Vanellus vanellus* Haradh 5 Feb, the largest recorded flock for Saudi Arabia. One **Spur-winged Lapwing** *V. spinosus* Haradh west pivot fields 5 Feb while a **Red-wattled Lapwing** *V. indicus* was near Shaybah (Empty Quarter) 8 Mar. 16 **Sociable Lapwings** *V. gregarius* Haradh 5 Feb (Plate 20), only the second record for Eastern province, with three **Caspian Plovers** *Anarhynchus asiaticus* same field/date. Two winter-plumaged **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* SAF 26 Feb. A single **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles exustus* SAF 12 Feb (third record Eastern province) while six Al Hayer, Riyadh, 3 Jun also unusual.

Two male **Diederik Cuckoos** *Chrysococcyx caprius* Al Mehfar park, Tanoumah, 30–31

Plate 20. Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* 5 February 2016, Haradh, Eastern province, Saudi Arabia. © *Jem Babbington*

Plate 21. Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* 22 January 2016, Sabkhat Al Fasl, Jubail, Eastern province, Saudi Arabia. © *Jem Babbington*

Plate 22. Woodlark *Lullula arborea* 15 January 2016, Sarrar, Eastern province, Saudi Arabia. © *Philip Roberts*

Plate 23. Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer* (*m.*) *moabiticus* 4 March 2016, Sabkhat Al Fasl, Jubail, Eastern province, Saudi Arabia. © *Jem Babbington*

May, one of which trapped/ringed. A juvenile **Pharaoh Eagle Owl** *Bubo ascalaphus* SAF 3 Jun (unusual site for sp) and a pair with two young Al Hayer, Riyadh, 3 Jun. An **Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* SAF 8 Jan (unusual winter record). One **White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* Deffi park, Jubail, 22 Jan–26 Feb and one SAF 4 Mar. Two **Collared Kingfishers** *Todirhamphus chloris* trapped/ringed Either mangroves, Jizan province, 1 Jun. Six of the wintering **Pied Kingfishers** *Ceryle rudis* at SAF until at least 4 Mar (Plate 21) with one remaining to 15 Apr and another remaining at Al Hair, Riyadh, to 22 Apr. A reeling **Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia* NADA dairy farm, Hufuf, 8 Apr. Three **'mangrove' white-eyes** *Zosterops* (*abyssinicus?*) sp, trapped/ringed Either mangroves 1 Jun. One **Black Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* near Sarrar 15 Jan was fifth record Eastern province, although sp common in west Saudi Arabia. Two **African Pipits** *Anthus cinnamomeus eximius* trapped/ringed Al Mefah park, Tanoumah, 31 May & 1 Jun. Two **Woodlarks** *Lullula arborea* near Sarrar, Eastern province, 15 Jan (Plate 22) only second record while flock of eleven **Dead Sea Sparrows** *Passer* (*m.*) *moabiticus* SAF 26 Feb–4 Mar (Plate 23) also only second record.

TURKEY

Short period of extreme cold during generally very mild winter brought many northern migrants to Black-sea coast. A record five **Common Eiders** *Somateria* [*m.*] *mollissima*, an increasingly frequent winter visitor, near Hersek Lagünü, sea of Marmara, 6–20 Jan and three Istanbul 2 Feb. 52 **Velvet Scoters** *Melanitta fusca* and a **Common Scoter** *M. nigra* at traditional site Yeşilırmak delta 20 Jan. One **Goosander** *Mergus merganser* İğneada 9 Jan. One **Horned Grebe** *Podiceps auritus* İğneada, Kırkareli, 8 Jan. A single **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor* lake Kulu 28 Mar–5 Apr possibly same individual as previous years. Single **Scopoli's Shearwaters** *Calonectris* (*d.*) *diomedea* off Mileyha 22 Feb & 5 Mar. A **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* 2 Jan Samsun, Kurupelit harbour (latest in series of overwintering records).

A **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* Mileyha, in well-watched Hatay province, 6 Feb and another 14 May at known Şanlıurfa breeding site. One **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* on passage over Hatay Subaşı 3 Apr, while a wintering bird Manyas Kuş Gölü 22 Jan. Five **Little Bustards** *Tetrax tetrax* 29 Feb Mogan lake while unusually large group (75) **Demoiselle Cranes** *Grus virgo* there 23 Mar. One **Caspian Plover** *Anarhynchus asiaticus* 4 Apr Göksu delta (extremely rare migrant). A **Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus* remained lake Küçükçekmece area, Istanbul, 1 Jan–17 Mar while two Sultanahmet area, also Istanbul, 2 Feb & 15 May (unclear if two or three birds involved). One **European Herring Gull** *L. argentatus* Black-sea coast Istanbul (Rumelifeneri) 16 Feb. A single, probably over-wintering **Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* Mileyha 9 Jan. Possibly first over-wintering **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* Mileyha, Hatay, 9 Jan while one **Booted Warbler** *Iduna caligata* there 12 Apr (month earlier than previous record). A single **Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia* ringed 23 May Kızılırmak delta (Plate 24). One **Asian Desert Warbler** *Sylvia* (*n.*) *nana* 29 Mar Antalya, following strong storms from the south (sp seems regular there). Mileyha beach, Hatay, again produced rare pipits: a **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* overwintered 9 Jan–26 Mar and three **Siberian Buff-bellied Pipits** *Anthus* (*rubescens*) *japonicus* 2 Jan–6 Feb. One **Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus* Çıralı beach, Antalya, 1 May and a **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* Yahyalı, Kayseri, 25 Jan.

Plate 24. Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* 23 May 2016, Kızılırmak delta, Samsun, Turkey. © *Kiraz Erciyas Yavuz*

Plate 25. Common Gull *Larus* (*c.*) *canus* 30 January 2016, Mafraq rubbish tip, United Arab Emirates. © *Oscar Campbell*

Plate 26. Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* seen during pelagic trip from Kalba, United Arab Emirates, 24 June 2016.

Plate 27. Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* seen during pelagic trip from Kalba, United Arab Emirates, 24 June 2016.

Plate 28. Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* seen during pelagic trip from Kalba, United Arab Emirates, 24 June 2016.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Two **Swinhoe's Petrels** *Oceanodroma monorhis* (seventh record) off Kalba 24 Jun. One **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus* seen on trip from Kalba 14 Apr, three on trip from Fujeirah 3 May and one off Fujairah-port beach 13 May. A **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* Zirku island 1 Feb. One **Eurasian Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* Saih al Salam 28 May (exceptionally late record). One **Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus* Wamm from 26 Mar (presumably long-stayer from July 2015). One of the juvenile **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* first found December 2015 last seen Ras al Khor, Dubai, 13 Mar. A **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* Bidiyah 10 Jan. Two **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos trachielotus* near Green Mubazzarah, Al Ain, end of May increasing to three throughout June. An unseasonal **Great Spotted Eagle** *Clanga clanga* there end of May into June. One **Water Rail** *Rallus (a.) aquaticus* Ajman 15 Jan. **Corncrakes** *Crex crex* Sila 1 May and Mamzar 14 May and one **White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus* Ghantoot 31 Mar–5Apr and male **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* Al Warsan 27 Mar. Up to two **Spotted Crakes** *P. porzana* regularly reported near Green Mubazzarah early May. Breeding **Grey-headed Swamphens** *Porphyrio (porphyrio) poliocephalus* Al Wathba January.

The **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* first seen Mafraq November 2015 remained throughout January while the winter's second record was at Zakkher 9 Feb–early Mar (eighth record). A **Sociable Lapwing** *V. gregarius* Al Zorah, Ajman, 19 Feb. One **Caspian Plover** *Anarhynchus asiaticus* Hamraniyah 15 Jan (unusual mid winter record) and presumably same bird there 21–22 Mar, and one Al Zorah 5 Mar. A **Jack Snipe** *Lymnocryptes minimus* Green Mubazzarah 17 Feb remained into March. A **Mediterranean Gull** *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus* at Abu Dhabi Golf and Equestrian Club 7–11 Jan and another Mafraq rubbish tip/STP 9–23 Jan, both 1st winter birds (14th & 15th records). One **Common Gull** *Larus (c.) canus* Mafraq rubbish tip 30 Jan (Plate 25) while a **Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscatus* seen during pelagic trip from Fujeirah 3 Jun and another, from Kalba, 24 Jun (Plate 26) when three **Arctic Terns** *Sterna paradisaea* also seen (fifth record, Plates 27, 28). One **Asian Koel** *Eudynamys scolopaceus* Al Warsan 7 Feb. First confirmed breeding record **Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* was a bird incubating two eggs at

Plate 29. Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* 24 May 2016, desert location, Abu Dhabi emirate, United Arab Emirates. © *Oscar Campbell*

Plate 30. Sykes's Warbler *Iduna rama* 13 May 2016, Kalba, United Arab Emirates. © *Simon Lloyd*

Plate 31. Black Scrub-Robin *Cercotrichas podobe* 3 April 2016, Sila, United Arab Emirates. © *Simon Lloyd*

Plate 32. Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata* 3 April 2016, Sila, United Arab Emirates. © *Simon Lloyd*

Plate 33. Hybrid Eastern Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe* (*hispanica*) *melanoleuca* × Pied Wheatear *O.* [*h.*] *pleschanka* 18 March 2016, Sila, United Arab Emirates. © *Oscar Campbell*

Plate 34. Hybrid Eastern Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe* (*hispanica*) *melanoleuca* × Pied Wheatear *O.* [*h.*] *pleschanka* 18 March 2016, Sila, United Arab Emirates. © *Oscar Campbell*

undisclosed site Abu Dhabi emirate (Plate 29) where birds have been singing for several years. An **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* Wamm farms 4 Jan while fourth record **Pacific Swift** *Apus* (*p.*) *pacificus* Yas Island 2 Jan. The **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* first found Al Ajban 19 Oct 2015 stayed until 5 Feb while another bird remained Dubai creek, Al Badia shoreline, 18 Jan–3 Mar. A **Bay-backed Shrike** *Lanius vittatus* Masafi 15 Apr. Two **Black Drongos** *Edolius macrocercus* Zabeel park, Dubai 17 Feb with over-wintering bird still present Mushreef park (from 10 Jun 2015). An **Ashy Drongo** *Edolius leucophaeus* (11th record) Al Ain 10 Mar. 70 **Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* Lulu island 19 Feb with flock

remaining into March. First record **Banded Martin** *Riparia cincta* Green Mubazzarah, Al Ain, 23 Jun.

Hume's Leaf Warblers *Phylloscopus humei* Ghantoot 15 Jan, Bhalghelam island 22 Jan, Abu Dhabi 13 Feb while one **Green Warbler** *P. (trochiloides) nitidus* (15th record) singing Mushrif Palace gardens 4 May. A **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus (arundinaceus) arundinaceus* Sila 5 May and two **Sykes's Warblers** *Iduna rama* Khor Kalba 13 May (Plate 30). A late **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* Abu Dhabi 3 Jun and one **Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* there 18 Mar. Seventh record **Black Scrub-Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* Sila 3 Apr (Plate 31) while rather early **White-throated Robins** *Irania gutturalis* Mamzar 11 Mar. **Semi-collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula semitorquata* Dubai 12 Mar, with more arriving late Mar (max four Abu Dhabi 24 Mar) and more reported many sites first half April (Plate 32). The **Caspian Stonechat** *Saxicola [torquatus] maurus hemprichii* found Nov 2015 Wamm farms remained to Feb. Three **Eastern Black-eared Wheatears** *Oenanthe (hispanica) melanoleuca* Lulu island 10 Mar. One hybrid **Eastern Black-eared Wheatear × Pied Wheatear** *O. [h.] pleschanka* 18 Mar (Plates 33, 34). A **White-crowned Wheatear** *O. leucopyga* Jebel Hafit 6 Feb and one **Eastern Mourning Wheatear** *O. [l.] lugens* there 19–20 Feb. One **Forest Wagtail** *Dendronanthus indicus* Mushrif Palace gardens 12 Feb.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Armenia: Miquel Bonet Julià; Azerbaijan: Micha Heiss, Pia Fetting, Tomas Axén Haraldsson; Cyprus: Jane Stylianou, Melis Charalambides, Damla Beton, Robin Snape; Iran: Abolghasem Khaleghizadeh, Magnus Ullman; Iraq: Ahmed M H Alderawi, Laith Ali, Mariwan Qadir Rahim; Israel: Yoav Perlman; Oman: Jens Eriksen (www.birdsoman.com); Saudi Arabia: Jem Babbington (www.birdsofsaudiarabia.com), Philip Roberts; Turkey: Kerem Ali Boyla, Nizamettin Yavuz; United Arab Emirates: Oscar Campbell, Tommy Pedersen (www.uaebirding.com/uae_news.html).

Ian Harrison, Llyswen Farm, Lôn y Felin, Aberaeron, SA46 0ED, UK. ianbirds@gmail.com

ROCKJUMPER
Worldwide Birding Adventures
SOME OF OUR 2017 TOURS
NORTHERN INDIA - BIRDS & TIGERS II
04 - 21 Dec 2017 (18 days)
BEST OF SOUTH AFRICA - CAPE & KRUGER I
13 - 23 Apr 2017 (11 days)
UAE & OMAN: ARABIAN BIRDING ADVENTURE
09 - 22 Nov 2017 (14 days)
We also offer
PRIVATE TOURS
PLEASE CONTACT US FOR YOUR
TOUR CATALOGUE
COMPLIMENTARY COPY
JOIN US
Website: www.rockjumperbirding.com
Tel: +27 (0) 33 394 0225
Email: info@rockjumperbirding.com
You Tube

British Birds

Birding in depth since 1907

Join our community – take out a subscription to the UK's leading monthly birding journal.

6 ISSUE TRIAL
SAVE OVER 50%

PLUS
FREE 3-MONTH TRIAL OF RARE BIRD ALERT

AVAILABLE BY SUBSCRIPTION ONLY

Bird Photograph of the Year 2014, Grey Heron · *Edmund Fellowes*

British Birds is a journal for all occasions. It's the key depository for our birding past; it keeps birders abreast of what's happening right now; and it will surely help us all to chart the future of ornithology.

Mark Cocker

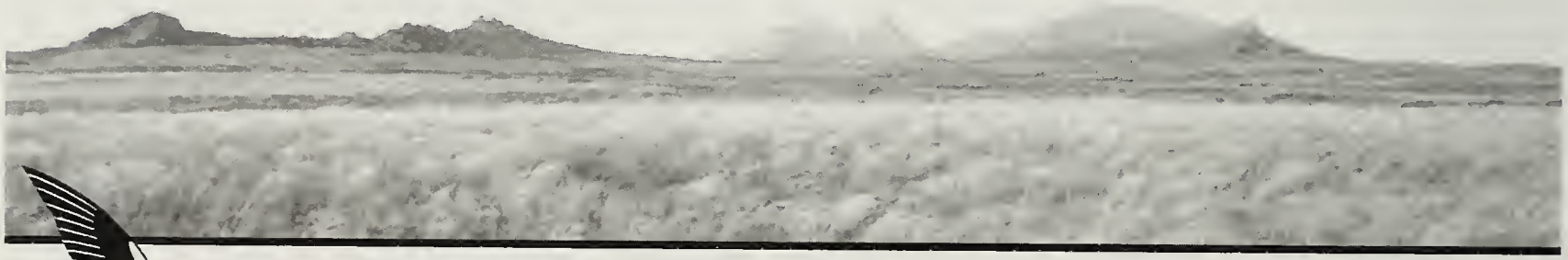
FIND OUT MORE
go to www.britishbirds.co.uk/sbf15/
or phone 01424 755155 and quote sbf15*

*phone lines are open Monday – Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm

The OSME region

Lies between Europe, China and the Horn of Africa on two major migration flyways crossing Central Asia's wind-swept steppes, the Caucasus' towering mountains, Arabia's wide arid deserts and the tropical seas of the Indian Ocean.

An awesome place for birds and birdwatchers.



ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST
THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

OSME

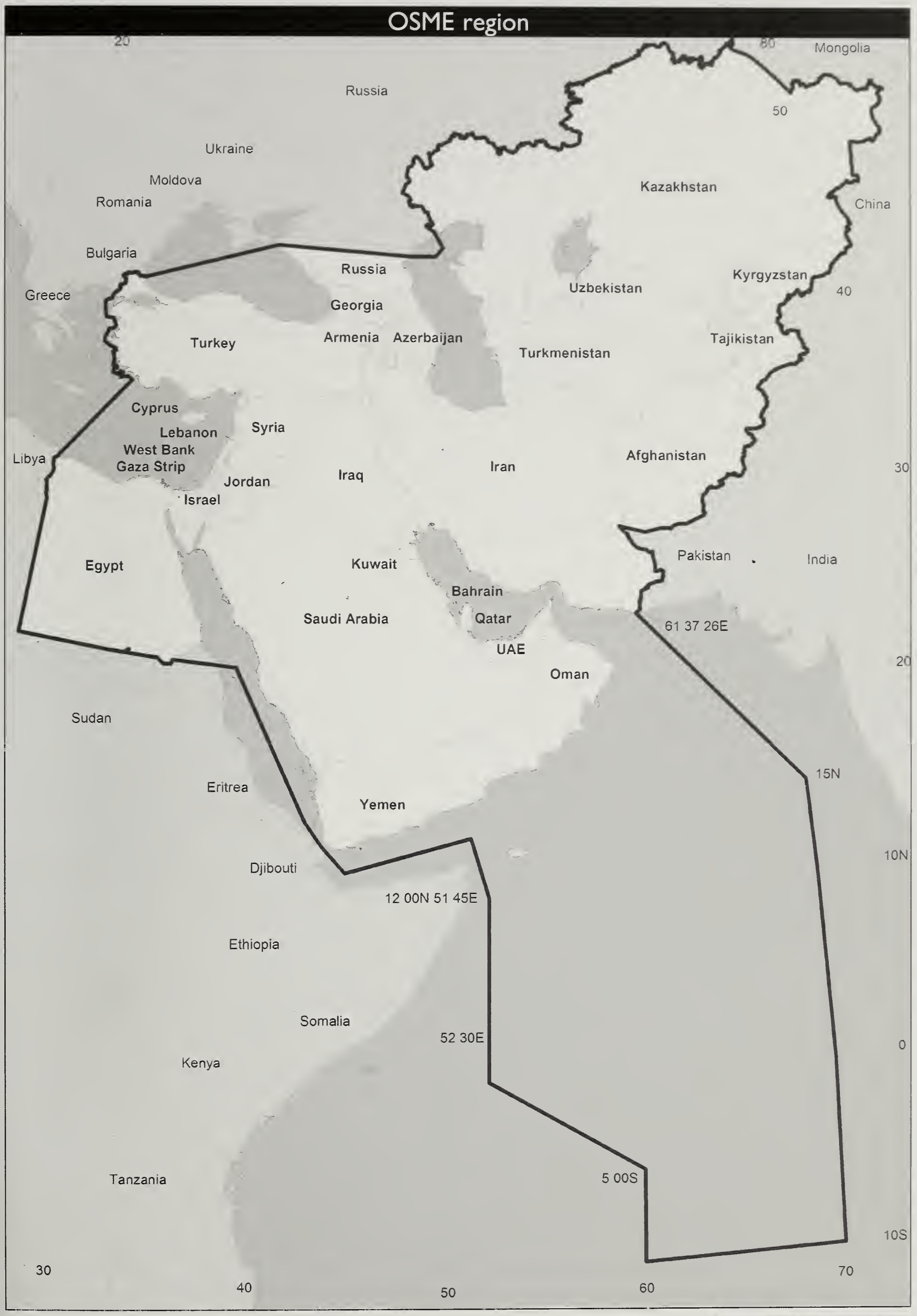
OSME brings together those curious and knowledgeable about the region's birds

Encourages
conservation and research through a fund for small-scale projects.

Publishes SANDGROUSE
an internationally respected journal with papers on the birds of the OSME region written by local and visiting scientists and enthusiasts.

OSME c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK **To join OSME** visit www.osme.org

UK registered charity no. 282938



ISSN 0260-4736
OSME region map design by Ian Fisher and colleagues at the RSPB
Typesetting & layout by Eng-Li Green engli@sufficio.org
Printed by Swallowtail Print of Norwich, UK sales@swallowtailprint.co.uk

FSC
www.fsc.org
MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC® C113523

Binoculars & Telescopes

opticron

Countryman BGA HD

Designed and built to deliver exceptional viewing in a lightweight rugged body, the Countryman BGA HD are ideal for the wildlife enthusiast wanting superior cross-field definition, light transmission and colour contrast packed into a superbly finished compact instrument weighing under 700g.

30 year guarantee.

8x32 £299, 8x42 £309, 10x42 £319, 10x50 £329, 12x50 £329

READ THE REVIEWS
opticron.co.uk /reviews

MM3 GA ED

The MM3 weighs around the same as pair of 42mm binoculars and can be used without a support for crystal clear flat field observation at magnifications below 20x. Unlike binoculars, they continue to deliver stunning clarity and definition up to 36x (50mm) and 45x (60mm).

Bodies: **MM3 50 GA ED £299, MM3 60 GA ED £399**
Recommended eyepieces: **HDF T 12-36x/15-45x £199, SDLv2 12-36x/15-45x £289**

Smartphone Digiscoping Kits

High quality, versatile and effective solution for anyone interested in taking high magnification video or photographs through their Opticron telescope fitted with the SDLv2 or HDF T zoom eyepiece. **£159**

Opticron equipment can be tried, tested and purchased at good optical retailers nationwide. For product information, your nearest stockist and to order a Product Guide please phone us on 01582 726522 or visit us online at www.opticron.co.uk

Opticron. Unit 21, Titan Court, Laporte Way, Luton, Beds, LU4 8EF UK Fax: 01582 723559 Email: sales@opticron.co.uk